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SPIRIT TRAIL



KATE *and* VIRGIL D. BOYLES



5

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

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At that moment a figure appeared in the flickering light

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The Spirit Trail

By KATE AND VIRGIL D. BOYLES

Authors of "The Homesteaders," "Langford of the
Three Bars," etc.



WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR
By MAYNARD DIXON

A. L. BURT COMPANY
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE GREAT SIOUX RESERVATION	11
II ON THE RIVER	16
III ON THE ROAD	30
IV THE STORM	52
V THE END OF THE JOURNEY	62
VI "THE LITTLE OX LIES STRUGGLING ON THE EARTH"	74
VII THE SUN DANCE	93
VIII WHY NOT?	117
IX THE MAN OF MANY MEMORIES SPEAKS TO THE BRULES	129
X THE DORSEY GANG	147
XI THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR ASKS FOR A RE- COUNT	162
XII THE WOOING OF THE WHITE FLOWER	183
XIII THE STRANGER WHO CAME AND WENT SI- LENTLY	199
XIV THE POT OF GOLD AT THE RAINBOW'S END	210
XV THE BRIDGE BUILDER	228
XVI A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY	244
XVII YOU HAD A PRETTY DREAM	261
XVIII LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER	274
XIX THE PERFECT FRIEND	291

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XX THE GATES THROWN OPEN	311
XXI IN THE CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS	329
XXII WHITE FLOWER MAKES A PROMISE	344
XXIII KATHARINE AND LOCKE	355
XXIV RUNNING BIRD COMES INTO HIS OWN AT LAST	371
XXV I THINK — I CAN NEVER GO HOME AGAIN	396

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
At that moment a figure appeared in the flickering light	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"My people," he began, "stay your hands. Put away your weapons"	144
"Oh, Running Bird," cried Katharine, "do my father and mother know where I am?"	338
Running Bird was steadily gaining on his enemy . . .	390

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

ARTICLE 9. The United States agrees that the following district of country, to-wit, viz: commencing on the east bank of the Missouri River where the forty-sixth parallel of north latitude crosses the same; thence along low water mark down said east bank to a point opposite where the northern line of the State of Nebraska strikes the river; thence west across said river and along the northern line of Nebraska to the one hundred and fourth degree of longitude west from Greenwich; thence north on said meridian to a point where the forty-sixth parallel of north latitude intercepts the same; thence due east along said parallel to the place of beginning; and, in addition thereto, all existing reservations on the east bank of said river shall be, and the same is, hereby set apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the Indians herein named, and for such other friendly tribes or individual Indians as from time to time they may be willing, with the consent of the United States, to admit amongst them; and the United States now solemnly agrees that no persons except those herein designated and authorized so to do, and except such officers, agents, and employees of the Government as may be authorized to enter upon Indian reservations in discharge of duties enjoined by law, shall ever be permitted to pass over, settle upon, or reside in the territory described in this article, or in such territory as may be added to this reservation for the use of said Indians, and henceforth they will, and do hereby, relinquish all claims or right in and to any portion of the United States or Territories, except such as is embraced within the limits aforesaid. . . .

ARTICLE 12. No treaty for the cession of any portion or part of the reservation herein described which may be held in common shall be of any validity or force as against the said Indians unless executed and signed by at least three-fourths of all the adult male Indians occupying and interested in the same. . . .

TREATY OF LARAMIE, 1868.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT SIOUX RESERVATION

RED CLOUD, Chief of the Oglala Sioux, at his buffalo camp on Powder River, received the messengers from the Peace Commission courteously but did not hasten down to Fort Laramie in response to the urgent request. Instead, he sent word that he thought he should wait until the forts were abandoned and the road closed up before he signed the treaty.

The road in question was that highway which the Government had proposed to construct from the California trail near Fort Laramie, across by way of the Powder River Valley to the gold fields in Montana and Idaho; and the forts were those builded along its course to protect the work of construction from the attacks of Red Cloud and his Oglalas, who resented bitterly this invasion of the richest, in fact the only, buffalo range left to the Sioux Nation. The Government did not as yet altogether trust Red Cloud. It was late August before it finally determined to take the chief at his word and to withdraw all the troops from the forts. This resolve was put into execution, but still the great chief did not come down to meet the peace commissioners.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"It is so late now," he said. "I think I will put up my Winter's meat before I go down to sign."

So, all during that Fall, while both the Indian department and the Military waited in nerve-trying suspense and uneasiness, Red Cloud, taking his own good time, busied himself in drying buffalo meat, and curing hides for the fast vanishing fur trade.

"Will Red Cloud keep faith?" men asked themselves and each other many times during those long days of waiting.

"Faith? Faith in a redskin?" said a member of the Commission, an army officer who stood high in the Government's confidence, and who was distinguished in his day as a peerless Indian-fighter, though somewhat overzealous perhaps. "Policy, if anything, or fear of the Great Father's vengeance, may bring him down to treat with us, but never good faith. I should not be at all surprised if he were plotting mischief right now."

"It is insolent, to say the least," grumbled a second member of the Commission, "to keep us waiting his pleasure with figurative fingers in our mouths, while he — goes hunting. It must be royal sport to keep the great Republic of the United States thus dangling — a right kingly conception of humor, and no mistake. For my part, I would with all my heart that I were stalking buffalo while my red friend danced to the never-ending time of my errant fancy. I should make him rue the day very bitterly that he taught me the game so well."

"Do not be afraid. Red Cloud will keep faith,"

THE GREAT SIOUX RESERVATION

said a new voice in the fort, calm yet full with the authority of confidence.

"How so? Do you come from the Powder? I thought you rode from the opposite direction."

"So I did," said the stranger, quietly. "I am not an emissary from Red Cloud. On the contrary, I have never seen this chief in my life. I have come directly from the Missouri River."

"On what, then, do you ground your so great faith?" asked someone, curiously.

"Because his is a righteous war," said the stranger, clearly, and he turned the steadfast lustre of his tired but brave gray eyes full upon his interlocutor.

"It is evident that you believe strongly in the Church Militant," said the grizzled old Indian-fighter, with a shrug of his shoulders and a glance at the plain gold cross gleaming in relief against the dark of the young man's waistcoat.

And the saddle-weary newcomer, remembering Ash Hollow and its stain, answered with a great sadness:

"Is it only thus that peace can come to this people — the peace of fear? Yes, I believe in fighting," he continued, the scintillation of a smile lighting up his rather grave features. "I am somewhat of a fighter myself. I fight a host of foes — the sun, moon, wind, thunder, lightning, the Aurora Borealis, Onkteri, Wakinyan, Takuxhanxkan, with all their satellites of serpents, lizards, frogs, owls, eagles, spirits of the dead, buzzards, ravens, foxes, wolves, and myriads of others, all under the evil tutelage of *wakan*-men. But more

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

than all," and there was a ring in his voice that few who heard him ever forgot, "I believe that the heart of man is instinctively honest, and that it is treachery that begets treachery. Red Cloud is a man. Soon you shall know."

"And Red Cloud was not at Ash Hollow," said another voice in good English, and yet no white man had spoken. If it was the young priest's dusky companion who had thus given speech, he did not again transgress. His mouth was set in lines of strong-willed taciturnity. His sombre eyes above his high cheekbones gazed haughtily past the interested glances focused upon his dark face.

"Were you at Ash Hollow?" asked a bystander, pointedly.

There was no answer.

"Who are you?" asked another.

Still no answer.

"On my word, but you are a surly fellow," said the Indian-fighter, turning to saunter away.

The priest put his hand affectionately on the Indian's shoulder. A sudden quiet fell upon the bystanders. Without warning, the air seemed all at once charged with a strange expectancy.

"Just a minute, General," he said. "I want to present my friend, Running Bird. His father was Little Thunder, Chief of the Brule Sioux, who fought and died at — Ash Hollow."

It was a warm, bright, still day in October when the priest and his Indian friend, Running Bird, after many

THE GREAT SIOUX RESERVATION

dusty days in the saddle, rode through the stockade gates of Fort Laramie. No one knew their errand, or cared, perhaps. The cross was following the sword into the Indian country—that was all. The Army was always in the van—the Church lagging behind. The Army was the real missionary after all. So those first soldiers preserved a patronizing, though kindly, tolerance toward the first missionaries; and at Washington, the Great Father tried to guide wisely the destinies of the one, while he looked forward hopefully to the ultimate triumph of both. The two men abode in the fort until the blue of October turned into the brown of November, and the wolves grew very bold indeed because their tawny skins were now the color of everything; until the thrifty hunter had his lodge stored full of meat for the Winter, though the reckless were still far afield; and on the ninth, Red Cloud, Chief of the Oglala Sioux, came down from his camp on the Powder and signed the treaty of peace.

CHAPTER II

ON THE RIVER

IT was July, and the melted snows from the mountains had swelled the great river until it slopped over its banks in the low places, backed itself up every ravine and gulch that drew to the high water level, and, when compressed within the narrow limits of high chalk-rock bluffs on either side, sprang forward and took the breach, rushing, roaring, swirling, leaping, in its race to get through and once more stretch itself, and the boom of whose frantic haste might be heard for a mile or more sounding upon the surface of the water or far inland through the light atmosphere. The heat of the noonday had spread filmy clouds between the earth and the sun with hints of rain in them, but so far they had brought only a fresher Summer breeze and sent it singing down the valley, where often, its right of way being disputed by some rocky promontory, it whipped the water for the insolence until the waves flew their white caps of unwilling submission, before it slipped whisperingly around the bend. Willow thickets, growing upon low bottom lands or upon islands where perhaps not long since a grain of sand had lodged on a submerged snag, and then another and another, until an island was formed, showed now but their wind-

ON THE RIVER

blown green tops like reeds in a marsh. On this side, now on that, as the changing river shifted its course, arose to sheer but varying heights the cut bluffs, some with white, staring, sphinx-like faces, others frowning darkly, but always fit monuments of a majestic solitude and of a history whose covers will never be opened, whose pictography never read. Up and down the river brooded the shadow of its centuries of silence and the mysterious charm of its remoteness, changed but infinitesimally since those never-to-be-forgotten days when Lewis and Clarke journeyed that way, giant pioneers who struck the first blow that sunk our frontier into the Western Ocean.

The sight and sound of a steamboat making its regal way through the tremendous current on that Summer day in the early seventies, surrounded as it was by these silent witnesses of an unwritten past, seemed to many of the passengers like an anachronism. The vessel was the *Far West* of the Coulson Packet Company, loaded at Yankton with Government supplies, and bound for the up-river forts and agencies. It was a strongly built stern-wheeler, its builders at Pittsburg bearing in mind always the idiosyncrasies of the Missouri River, for traffic on whose waters it was especially designed; so that the push of the channel had but little effect in delaying the boat's usual rate of progress.

On the cool side of the upper deck sat the wife and daughter of the newly appointed agent of Big Bend Agency. At least the wife was sitting. The daughter walked the deck in her quick impatience.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Are you tired already, Katharine?" asked the mother, a pale, slight, fair little woman, who was quite content to sit quietly in her chair while her tall daughter paced restlessly to and fro.

"Already, mother? When was I ever not tired of this — madcap and heartless demand of my father's?"

"I mean tired of this boat; and please don't call it heartless, dear. Your father only asked, and we — we came because it was our duty to come. It ought to be our pleasure. I am trying to make it mine. He is so very lonely."

"You mean that you came because he wanted you to, and I came because — well, perhaps I was ashamed to let my little mother show a braver spirit than mine; and perhaps I was too cowardly to be left alone; and still another perhaps," she said, crumpling her tall self once more into her chair and laughing affectionately, "I came to protect your beautiful soft hair, mother. I thought maybe when they went to take it, — those dreadful tomahawk men, — if I offered mine instead, they might accept the sacrifice because, you see, mine is yellower than yours though not half so pretty; but my hope lies in the fact that the savage mind, devoid of taste or judgment in art, would immediately grasp after the glitter and leave the gold."

"What nonsense!" said Mrs. Mendenhall, with a little laugh in which there was a minor note of tears and dread. "But I cannot help thinking, Katharine, that you had far better have remained at home, at least for the present. It will be very lonely for you."

ON THE RIVER

"Home, mother?" said Katharine, and there was a peculiar, intent, almost tragic look in her beautiful eyes, tragic because of its hint of prophecy. "We are going home. We have left behind us everything that was sweet and pleasant and worth while, and we are going to a wilderness of loneliness and to dreary wastes of never ending crudeness and barbarism — but we are going home. We must never forget that."

"Not you, dear," said the older woman, quietly, tears springing to the faded blue eyes. "You will go back some day — very soon, perhaps; and I am an old woman, so what does it matter where I am so I be with my husband?"

"If I thought," said Katharine, with a quick change of mood, "really and truly thought that I should have to live the rest of my days among the Indians, I should jump from this deck down there into that yellow whirlpool right this minute. You need n't smile, mother. I mean it — almost. For it would come to that in the end. So why wait for the slow torture of approaching insanity? When my mind should be altogether lost, I should simply walk off one of those ghostly cliffs some dark night, and that would be the end. If I ever should lose my mind, those lonesome cliffs would haunt me to my undoing,— that I know,— so I should take the leap at once and spare myself the misery between. Now forgive me, little mother, for my brutal selfishness. I had to thrash it all out to you, had n't I? It was the only way to regain my shreds and tatters of self-respect. I am happier now. I have talked out the

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

demon of my unrest. I could bear even hours on a sand bar. I walk the deck no more."

She picked up a book that had fallen to the floor and opened it resolutely. Hers was a striking figure, sitting there in the shade of the eastern row of staterooms, a flower plucked from the very heart of civilization, being borne to the very heart of the Great Reservation, and so evidently against her choice if not against her will. The set face forced to its task of reading, and the drooping poise of the tall, beautifully rounded young body, both spoke eloquently of a life loved and shielded, humored and self-effaced for, until the queenly progress of it had altogether, without warning, come upon one of those quiet forces of nature that for all their quietness and all their unassumingness yet rule the world. The man had said, "Come," and the woman was coming. The man was Katharine Mendenhall's father, and the woman, the slight, pale little lady at her side. That was why she sat chafing on the upper deck of the *Far West*, bound for the upper river. The meeker woman, hearkening to the call of the man, had conquered. Katharine was twenty-four and her hair was as yellow with gold as were the shining depths of that treasure locked and guarded within the storehouses of those darkly showing, splendid Indian hills, covered over with their wonderful forests of pines — so soon to set the passion of gain of a great country aflame, so that men would forget their honor, and chief magistrates their sacred trust, because of the lure there is in the shining gold. Her eyes were blue, a deep,

ON THE RIVER

dark blue, with a straightforward self-confident outlook. From the moment of coming aboard at Yankton she had so wrapped herself in the outer garments of reserve that no one had dared to speak to her as yet. Mrs. Mendenhall, on the contrary, at luncheon in the dining saloon, had made tentative advances toward fellowship with one or two persons who seemed, like her, to be coming into a far country.

"What noise is that?" asked Katharine, suddenly, laying down her book. "Is it thunder?"

"It is too continuous for thunder," replied the older woman, anxiously. "I have been hearing it for some time. Ask the Captain, Katharine, won't you? It gets on one's nerves."

"You must learn to do without such inconvenient things as nerves in this haunt of the savage, mother mine," said Katharine, laughingly, but she rose to obey the request. She had laid aside her silk travelling coat because of the cloudy heat of the afternoon, and she looked very neat and trim in her faultlessly made frock, as she made her way to the pilot-house with a calm assurance of her perfect right to do anything or to go anywhere she pleased in the world.

"That rumbling, Miss? That's rapids," responded the Captain, courteously. The pilot did not turn at the question. His bronzed face was intent; his eyes, trained to steadfastness by much looking forward, were fixed on the narrowing waters ahead.

"How can there be rapids in the Missouri?" demanded Katharine, unconvinced.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"I think the old river is cutting a new channel up there a ways — she's a horribly fickle creature. I reckon all that spread out water at the bend thrown over here and forcing itself through these narrow limits is causing the trouble."

"Is there any danger?" asked Katharine, with a little chill of apprehension.

"Not the least. The *Far West* will take that like a swallow on the wing. Nothing in this heathen river surprises her any more. Besides, she's built for it."

The roar of the rapids was unmistakable now to all, and in another moment the stanch steamer was almost staggering beneath the force of opposition it met to its further progress. The waves raced and roared and whirled. The thunder of their wild haste was deafening. But the boat rallied gallantly to the renewed pressure of steam and pursued her stately way. Katharine returned to her mother.

"We are losing time," she fretted, discontentedly.

"Are you in such great haste to meet your savage friends?" asked her mother, quietly.

"It's like — jumping into the river," said Katharine, whimsically. "I want to have it over with."

"Why, child, how still it is!" exclaimed Mrs. Mendenhall, strangely startled. "Is it because we are through the rapids?"

"Do you hear the engine?" asked Katharine, almost in a whisper. "Listen."

An eerie silence at first greeted their strained atten-

ON THE RIVER

tion, but it was not long before the old familiar boom of the tumbling current came to them with a new distinctness. That was all. It seemed louder than before because of the cessation of other sound. It was the sudden stopping of the noise of the throbbing engine that had so modified the beat upon the ears that for the moment it seemed as if even the seething waters were quiet.

"We are standing still," cried Mrs. Mendenhall, in terror.

"Standing still?" said Katharine, with a forced composure. "Mother, we are floating down stream."

They did not drift long. Just below the rapids, the vessel staggered, strained a little, quivered through all her heavy timbers, and stood still. Instantly there was the wildest confusion throughout the steamer — but to the passengers' deck came the Captain, at once quelling the threatened panic with his clear, calm explanations.

"The engine broke down and we thought to let the boat drift below the rapids before we deemed it wise to anchor. There is not the least danger. No, we have not run on a snag — only a sand-bar. Nothing is wrong with the boat except the engine. No, we have not sprung a leak. It will be necessary to get a steam boat to tow us back to Yankton, and we shall be obliged to tie up two or three days for repairs. As it will be impossible to get a boat here until some time to-morrow, it would seem that we are doomed to spend the night on this sand-bar. It is extremely provoking."

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

He paused to mop his heated face with his handkerchief.

"I am very anxious to go on," said Mrs. Mendenhall. "Do you think there will be any other boat going up the river right away?"

"I think not," the Captain replied. "The *Josephine* expects to leave Yankton in about a week, but by that time we will be two or three days on our journey. I am afraid there is no alternative but for you to wait until we get our engine repaired and are ready to make a new start." The Captain turned and walked away. It was not long, however, before the two ladies saw him returning, followed by two gentlemen.

"Let me present Mr. Hugh Hunt," he said, "Indian missionary, and Mr. Locke Raynor. Mr. Raynor has been appointed issue clerk at the Agency, I believe."

"Captain Maxwell informs me," said the man called Locke Raynor, in a voice that was slow and pleasing, "that you were anxious to reach the Agency with as little delay as possible. I am also very anxious to proceed. I take it that Mr. Hunt, too, does not greatly relish a stop-over. The Captain informs me that there are horses on board, and saddles, to be consigned to Major Mendenhall at the Agency, and he has suggested that we might take these animals and continue the trip overland. He also suggested that you might possibly like to accompany us. There are blankets and plenty of provisions. If you think you can put up with the hardships of such a journey, it will enable you to reach

ON THE RIVER

the Agency three or four days sooner than you will if you wait for the boat."

"If only Mr. Mendenhall had met us!" mourned the Major's lady.

"He was unavoidably detained?" asked Locke Raynor, politely.

"Yes. We found a telegram waiting for us at Yankton saying that the Indians were restless and that he dared not leave the Agency at present."

"I don't see why they had to go and get all worked up the very day my father was to meet us," fretted Katharine. "Why didn't they have their ridiculous old dances before we left home? Or if they were too contrary to do that, then they might at least have waited until we were safe in their wretched country. What is it all about, anyway?"

"Perhaps their medicine men need a little time for reflection behind steel bars, Miss Mendenhall. They have held communion with evil spirits so long that we need not fear that they will be too lonely in captivity. And I think their braves need the feel of good powder and lead. Some day, perhaps, we shall be sorry for our leniency."

The priest had not yet spoken. He stood waiting, slight, pale-faced, quiet, with big gray eyes that were dark and burning with the lustre of the everlasting fires of his great soul—fires that burned so steadily that it seemed as if they must some time consume the spare frame.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Then why don't they order out the soldiers?" demanded Katharine, impatiently.

"They have ordered them out often — very often. I do not think that this is the time for the soldiers, Miss Mendenhall," said the priest, quietly. His voice was low and musical with the cultured cadences in it that spoke of cities and home and the land of the rising sun. A tiny sob of homesickness came suddenly into Katharine's throat, but she smothered it quickly.

"You think there is no danger, then?" she asked.

"Of an outbreak? I hope not. I trust not."

"Won't you tell me what the trouble is?"

"It is only that General Custer has been sent to the Black Hills."

"And high time, too," said Captain Maxwell, decidedly.

"Perhaps," said the priest, with a strange smile. "But if he would go back to Fort Abraham Lincoln, Major Mendenhall might meet his wife and daughter."

"Does your mother ride, Miss Mendenhall?" asked Locke Raynor, observing an impatience on the part of the Captain to have the matter disposed of one way or another.

"Not of late. She used to be accounted a fine horsewoman."

"And you?"

"I can do — what I have to do," said Katharine, briefly.

"Then let me urge you to take to the horses," said Locke Raynor. "If there should be a general up-

O N T H E R I V E R

rising — though that is surely a remote contingency — you might be indefinitely delayed; but once at the Agency, you will be safe, no matter what happens.”

“It will be a very harsh journey,” cautioned Hugh Hunt, gravely, “for gentlewomen. We have no tent, and the stage route is not an extraordinarily good one. The stage houses are very primitive. They are unaccustomed to rough-riding. It is very probable that we shall have rain.”

Katharine turned to him quickly.

“Then you think there is danger if we choose the land journey?”

“From what source?”

“The Indians.”

“The Indians? My Indians? No, I do not think there is any danger from that source.”

“Please then, Captain Maxwell, put us ashore,” said Katharine, decidedly. “I said I could stand hours on a sand bar, but I cannot. I should die. Anything is better than stagnation. I think we can make almost as good time riding as the steamer does, anyway, going up stream, and that will save my father a great deal of unnecessary suspense.”

“As I explained to Mr. Raynor,” said the Captain, “there are only two horses aboard for Major Mendenhall. They were doubtless intended especially for you ladies. But it is only a short distance to Springfield, where you can either secure more horses or wait for the stage. There will probably be others going as far as Springfield. So be it, then.”

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

The men made short work of transferring their meagre effects to the skiff. Obligated as they would be to walk some little distance before finding horses for themselves, they saw the mistake of attempting to carry more than the strictest necessity demanded.

Safely ensconced in the stern with her mother, Katharine yet could not keep back a gasp of sheer dread as the small boat pulled away from the stranded steamer. The gloomy waste of choppy, racing waves between her and the distant shore were brought so close to her that in reaching to slap the sides of the frail craft, the water often splashed over, and once wet her arm to the elbow as she clung desperately to the side of the skiff.

"Do not be afraid," said Locke Raynor, with kindly assurance, as he plied one pair of oars with long, steady sweeps of unmistakable accustomedness. One of the steamer's crew bent to a second stand, so the little craft cut the current, pointing upstream, with a fair degree of directness.

But Katharine's involuntary gasp turned into a real cry of alarm as a sudden tremendous splash, followed almost instantaneously by another as great, sounded behind her.

"It is only your horses," said Locke, with a quiet smile. "They were pushed overboard so they would swim in the wake of our boat. Good boys! They have made a gallant recovery and are coming after us in fine shape—heads up—no slopping or kicking. There's grit for you."

It seemed as if this man must be always reassuring

ON THE RIVER

her, Katharine Mendenhall, who had never before been afraid of anything in all her proud young life. This man was a stranger. It was altogether within the bounds of possibility that he was one of those unfortunate beings who, having made serious mistakes in the places that knew them, wished to lose themselves in the wide and rough and unasking frontier. She had known of men dropping quietly out of their wonted niches, and people had said of such, vaguely: "They have gone West." Why was this unknown man observing her so closely as to be conscious of her least movement? She resented it, even while a quick faith in his power to guide them safely through the gloomy mazes of tossing water sprang into life and grew steadily.

"I thought maybe it was a — sea serpent," she said, trying to smile with a brave unconcern.

When the stragglers from the *Far West* arrived at Springfield, there were still some hours of daylight left. After consultation, the Agency party, consisting of Mrs. Mendenhall and Katharine, the Missionary and Locke Raynor, decided to push on as long as they could distinguish the trail and then to make their own camp for the night. Two extra horses were easily obtained, and the travellers soon left the little hill settlement and began their long overland journey to the Agency.

CHAPTER III

ON THE ROAD

THE rather scant camp outfit consisted mainly of blankets, destined for beds at night, what few articles of extra clothing Mrs. Mendenhall and Katharine were allowed to take, and abundant rations of crackers, bacon, and coffee, sufficient to provide a livelihood for several days, even without the aid of any chance game that might happen along. Locke Raynor carried with him, besides, a rifle, slung across the pommel of his saddle, and a pistol at his belt.

"The rifle is for Mr. Heap Big Brave, and the pistol is for our mutual friend, the rattlesnake," he explained, lightly, as he stowed his weapons into their places. "You will forgive me, Mrs. Mendenhall," he added, gravely, observing her look of sudden terror. "That is just my nonsense. I only mean to vary the monotony of a diet of bacon with an occasional brace of grouse or quail or ducks or — if the worst comes to the worst — a coyote. Where is your gun, Mr. Hunt?"

"May I not share your coyote?" asked the young priest, smilingly.

"To the last crumb — or I should say bone," replied Locke. "But are you wise?"

O N T H E R O A D

The priest looked back for a moment at the rapidly vanishing little town now almost lost in the grasp of the rugged hills. It marked the boundary of the earlier Territorial settlements. Beyond was the vast Indian country. Then his glance rested upon the two gentlewomen from the world that had once been his — refined, unaccustomed, aristocratic, trusting, as helpless, if the worst befell, as lost babies, and he bowed his head in silence for a moment. When he looked up, there was a serene prescience on his fine face.

"That is my belief," he said. "I pray God that I speak not out of mine own conceit."

"But consider," urged Locke, in a low voice. "It is surely not a question of sentiment or even of belief. It is not the time to seek to prove or disprove a creed or a stubborn personal opinion. Gentlewomen have been intrusted to our care. As men —"

"Did you think I would n't fight?" asked the Missionary, with a quizzical smile.

"What could you do unarmed?"

"I could — keep the faith," said Hugh Hunt.

They rode until the late dusk of the Summer's day had fallen and the solitude of the lonely trail was merged in the deeper solitude of the coming night. The heat clouds had passed away, and a white afterglow lay like a silver stream upon the Western horizon. It was so still that the murmur of the swiftly gliding water was the one dominant note in the quiet tones of the evening.

They pitched their camp on a level space close to the

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

river, tethered their horses on the grassy slope inland; and then, while Katharine and her mother looked on in weary wonder, the men built an immense camp fire of driftwood, deftly sliced and toasted strings of bacon, using long, pointed, green sticks for toasting forks, and skilfully pulling in just in time to save the delicious morsels before the stick burned through. These they placed upon crackers and served to the tired and hungry guests with elaborate politeness. Even the coffee tasted good, although made with the muddy unsettled water of the Missouri and quaffed from tin cups.

"Never mind," said Locke Raynor, gayly. "We'll have things just fit for our breakfast." He washed the coffee pot with an unusual display of energy, filled it with fresh water, and placed it carefully aside under a small cluster of cool-leaved baby cottonwoods. "It will be as clear as crystal in the morning," he said, confidently.

"But you have only one coffee pot and nothing else that will hold water large enough for the purpose," objected Katharine. "What will you do with the clear water while you dispose of the dregs?"

"That's to-morrow's tangle," he laughed, good-humoredly, "and let's not drink our coffee till we get it."

And then, because they must be astir very early in the morning, he ordered them all to their leafy couches. The men had cut down the rank undergrowth and had gathered grass and tender shoots, so that the couches

ON THE ROAD

were fairly comfortable, though the dark, brooding, star-shot sky was their only canopy.

"But you have given us more than our share of blankets," protested Mrs. Mendenhall, weakly. She was very tired, too tired to reason, but she felt the kindness.

"Oh, I shall sit up to keep the mosquitoes out of camp," said Locke, lightly.

"Not all night," said Katharine, firmly. "If a watch is necessary, we shall take our turns."

"Only as a precaution to insure the presence of our horses in the morning. We should find ourselves somewhat handicapped if they should break loose or be stolen. At midnight, I shall change places with the priest, so you see one pair of blankets will be ample for us both."

Katharine could not sleep. It was so still, and the night was so big and mysterious, and she ached so from her unaccustomed riding. Her mother, utterly exhausted, slept soundly by her side. But her mother was going home. Why should her sleep not be natural and sweet? She was going home to the sheltering arms of her rightful mate — the coming together of whom, perhaps, had been planned æons ago — before the world began — perhaps in one of those luminous star worlds that burned so steadily up there in the soft sky. This man was her — Katharine's — father, and she loved him better than any other man in all the world; and yet it was different — her going and her mother's. Was there a destiny for her written up there

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"I asked you the question."

"Oh, pardon me. Yes, I am glad to go. Are you?"

"I think I — loathe it," she said, slowly.

"Then why do you go?"

"I don't know. Fate, maybe. My father was very good. He said I could do as I pleased — come with my mother or stay in the East with friends. I don't know why I came. There is a spell on me, I think. I did n't want to come, and yet here I am."

"Are you afraid?"

"Horribly."

"You will soon get accustomed to your undesirable neighbors, however, and the soldiers are always here."

"What are you making?" she asked, presently, and with some curiosity.

"Fishing tackle," he replied, promptly. "We are to have a fine plump cat for breakfast — did n't you know that?"

"How tireless you are!"

"Not at all. I am training myself to the whether-or-no patience of the pioneer — that is all."

"Oh! Then you are just from the East — like me?"

"I am just from the East — like you."

"I wonder how long it takes to make an old settler," she said, reflectively.

"May I ask why? Do you wish to establish, thus early, your claims to the distinction of being one of the

O N T H E R O A D

first white families?" he asked, gravely enough, but his eyes twinkled.

"Oh, I was just wondering," she said. "I feel like an old settler already."

"I met a man on the boat whose claim ante-dates yours. He was positively grizzled with his years of pioneering. In fact, he was one of the originals. To quote his own words: 'I came to this country in — let me see — it was shortly after the war, I remember, because I had drifted out here in the hopes of falling into something. A war like that sort of cuts a man away from the things he was doing before. Let me see — it was in — I remember the grasshoppers came that year and ate up all my sod watermelons and squashes and sweet corn, and so I was forced to go back to practicing law. That was — pshaw, how time steals one's memory! The following year was the year of the Great Treaty, and that was in sixty-eight; surely, I cannot be at fault there. So my residence in this country must date back to sixty-seven; yes, sir, to sixty-seven; That's a long time!'"

"What an old, old settler," she laughed, softly. "I gladly acknowledge his priority and sincerely trust that my record will never equal his. Are you ever going back?"

"Back where?"

"Back East."

"I don't know. Perhaps, if I fail to make good."

"Have you a mission? Everybody who comes here

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

seems to have a mission — everybody but me. I wish I had one, too."

"I have one for you — two for you. Will you accept them?"

Both looked up, momentarily startled. Hugh Hunt stood before them fully awake, his beautiful, aristocratic hands folded on his arms. His voice was wonderfully sweet, low-toned, and penetrating. The fire flared up suddenly and sent a wavering shaft of light across his pale face.

"What are they?" whispered Katharine, awestricken by the unseen but powerfully felt presence of something diviner even than the divine authority of this one sent, whose slight frame seemed to tower to great heights as he stood there in the flickering firelight, while all about him was the night, the dark, warm, Summer night.

"Leave your unfair and ignorant prejudices behind you — here in the dark where all prejudice has its being. Always keep faith with my Indians. Because Inkpaduta, son of the renegade, Wamdesapa, fell upon Spirit Lake and killed its people, we held the Wahpekutas accountable, although they had disowned and driven away the renegade band more than forty years before. Was that keeping faith? Try to believe that for every Inkpaduta there is a John Other Day, and for every Smutty Bear, a Struck-by-the-Ree. What if I die and you die and the Indian is still a Savage at heart? Is nothing then worth while? It took nineteen Christian centuries to make you and me what we are — a peculiar people. That is the end of my firstly. My secondly

ON THE ROAD

is —" he paused and looked at her so searchingly that she was strangely moved. It was as if he summoned her in that soul search to grow into the ideal of his divine conception of womanhood, and she shivered a little, for her brief, premonitory glimpse of the revealed way showed her also that it was a lonely way. "My secondly is," he repeated, slowly, "make the women — like you. Why, I discover that I have a thirdly," he continued, smiling. "It is, go to bed. Already these wolves scent the dawn. The sun must see us on our way."

To the Missionary, laving his face and hands in the swift stream in the early morning, came Locke Raynor.

"I wish you would tell me what it really means," he began, abruptly.

"I think the current was too swift and it stole your bait," smiled the Missionary.

"Oh, I don't mean about the empty hooks, you know," laughed Locke. "I mean this — disturbance of the Indians. For that matter, I never knew the time when there wasn't a disturbance — especially dating from the time we began the hopeless task of civilizing them by treating them like white men. What I mean, is there anything in this particular last disturbance that kept Major Mendenhall from meeting his wife and daughter at Yankton that will make their sojourn at the Agency unpleasant or — dangerous?"

The Missionary towelled his face and hands carefully before answering with deliberation:

"Is it treating Indians like white men to herd them

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

like cattle on isolated lands and to feed them like babes or the feeble-minded? Only the riotous, profligate van of civilization touches the frayed edges of their centuries of superstition and prejudice, while the heart of them, the great heart of them, remains locked against you and me, and their passion for liberty and their idolatry of the gods of their fathers are guarded so secretly and so tenaciously and so sleeplessly, that all the puny blows of civilization's first onslaught to break them and reconstruct, are as impotent as were winds and floods beating upon the house that was builded on a rock. Not long ago a good friend of mine, a Teton Chief from way up the river, said to me that civilization seemed to him a great stream whose waters ran pure and clear in mid-channel, but whose banks were strewn with refuse and filth."

"You are hard on the van, Mr. Hunt. We are not all profligates, wine-bibbers and woman-stealers," said Locke, thoughtfully. "And bad as the Army is sometimes, or individuals of it, the Church waited for it to make safe the way. And is not that as it should be? What is the Church doing more than the Army or the Agencies are doing or backing up the Church in doing?"

"Mr. Raynor," and he lifted his great, luminous eyes to the Western hills, "the Church is seeking — often weary, often sad, often lonely, but always seeking — the key of understanding that will unlock those great, mysterious, superstition-shadowed hearts to the light and warmth and manliness of the Christ and the fellowship

ON THE ROAD

that he has bequeathed to all the world. We want to maintain their manhood, not to crush it out by force, corrupt it by evil communication, or degrade it by taking from them the self-respect and self-reliance that are the high and just rewards of earning their own livelihood; and that right is man's by right of birth."

"I stand rebuked," said Locke, "and God knows you handful of fearless seekers go alone where other men go in companies or regiments. But it all seems so hopeless. If the Sioux indulge in rapine and murder less frequently than of yore, must we not in honesty say that it is because of the wholesome fear which they bear toward the Great Father at Washington, and his efficient armies? And not because of a change of heart? Would it not be better to subdue them altogether right in the beginning and then teach them the new religion?"

"Is Christianity, then, a religion for weaklings and degenerates?" cried the Missionary, strongly. "Let this people keep their manhood before everything. Let them be men even before they are Christians." His expression became rapt, prophetic. "What if to-day, in their childish love of form and mystery, they gather here on these rugged bluffs or on yonder illimitable plain, to look at the spotless garment of the Indians' Apostle — him they call White Robe — with awe and wonder, to delight in the strange and solemn music of hymns, and to pray to the — unknown God; and to-morrow, with their belief in necromantic trickery seemingly undimmed, present their prize ponies to some *wakan-man* for his fancied aid in driving out an evil spirit? Will not

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

the day after that be again the day of the White Robe and the — unknown God? And, my friend, which do you believe will prevail in the last great day? You asked me," he continued, as if answering a question just propounded, "what effect the present unrest among all the Sioux tribes will have upon the life at the Agency. The Brule and Crow Creek Indians, though wild and somewhat unruly, are friendly enough to the whites. They like Major Mendenhall. If there is trouble, it will be with the western tribes. Mr. Raynor, the ladies are waiting for us."

The little party journeyed the north trail all that long Summer day with conscientious perseverance. They met no human being between stage houses. At noon, burned and travel-stained, they rode into White Swan, just across the river from Fort Randall, which in that day was the centre of military operations in the lower Dakota Indian country. From Fort Randall, soldiers were sent to any of the Agencies where there was trouble with the Indians, and there they remained until the incipient excitement was quelled or the insubordination summarily dealt with. In fact, that whole region up and down the great river for many, many miles was dominated by the troops at Fort Randall. At White Swan, on the north bank, which was a distributing point, there were only a trader's store and a mess-house. Here for an hour or so Major Mendenhall's friends rested; and here, gazing steadily across the white glare of the sun on the water to the green hills beyond, where the walls of the fort swam peacefully

O N T H E R O A D

in the shimmering sunlight, Hugh Hunt pondered many things. His chief thought was how soon, if ever, these sunny hills and yon rolling distances would resound to a war-cry, never yet so loud because never yet, perhaps, had hearth and home of a free people been threatened with so base, so arrogant, so flagrant an usurpation; how soon, if ever, the stream, trickling to the river would run red with the blood of two haughty races, both conquerors in their day, never yet so red because never yet, perhaps, had a hunted people been so near the end of their pitiful remnant of resources that they must perforce turn at bay and fight the hunter to the death. He had gone to meet the Indians' Apostle, overborne with the weight of this terrible thing which must come to pass as surely as the stars kept to their courses, unless — a film came over his brilliant eyes — yes, unless the Indians' Apostle found a way to shock out of its rabid course this evil cancer of land lust and, more despotic still, the gold lust. For he, having fellowship with some of those who knew what their mountains held but who knew how to keep their secret, realized that the lust of gold must one day — God alone knew when — lay its tyrannical hold upon men. This meeting with the Missionary Bishop at Yankton had been a revelation. All his hurt and weariness and bitter soul cry of "No use, no use," had dropped from him like a ragged, weather-stained outer garment, discarded because he had come home. He had left the compassionate presence of the prelate a prophet. He had caught a glimpse of a divine soul-purpose and from his heart he believed that the

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Apostle would find a way to avert the awful calamity, although the task was the more colossal because he had been sent to the Indians only.

"We must be going, Mr. Hunt."

Locke Raynor's voice came to him as from another world.

"You have been day-dreaming. I hesitated to disturb you but the sun is already long past the meridian."

Hugh Hunt, the dreamer, brushed his hand before his eyes, smiled, rose, and they once more pursued their journey.

As that third day wore on, the country became wilder-looking and more and more rugged and lonely. Heat clouds again formed before the sun, making the ride much more endurable, unprotected as the riders were by sun-shade or sombrero. Even so, white lines of utter weariness began showing around Mrs. Mendenhall's plucky mouth, and even Katharine's proud head had a pathetic little droop; but neither would suggest a halt. It was very warm, despite the cloud, and as evening approached, the clouds mobilized and began piling up all along the line of the western horizon.

Pressing on yet a little farther, seeking a more fitting spot for their camp, and about to skirt a hill, they were suddenly brought face to face with a small band of Indians, all mounted, all bearing white men's weapons, and all clad from crown to toe in full war paraphernalia of paint and feather. The meeting was plainly unexpected on both sides. The Indians, who had rounded

ON THE ROAD

the curve at a uniform canter as if to make a certain goal before the sun set, drew rein so quickly that their intrepid little ponies settled back almost upon their haunches. The quiet of coming night was upon all the land — man-free for many miles of primeval solitude, save for the four white people, Agency-bound, and the dozen painted, incongruous Sioux braves — or was it the little group of wanderers from the crippled *Far West* who were the incongruous ones? Mrs. Mendenhall and Katharine had turned as white as death. Involuntarily, Locke's hand dropped to his rifle, but a touch from the Missionary stayed him.

"I warn you," said Locke to the priest, determinedly, "that I am ready, and at the least hostile movement I shall kill. Remember you have no weapon."

He who seemed to be the War Chief of the Indians, glanced at the speaker, carelessly. If he understood the action or the words, he made no sign.

"Peace be with you, my children," said the Missionary, adopting the quaint phraseology of an elder day. He spoke to them in Dakota. "We had hoped to lodge at Bijou Hills to-night, but the night finds us still many miles away. Can you tell us where there is a favorable camping spot hereabouts?"

To the surprise of all, he received an answer in fair English from the Chief.

"The Slender Ash is far from home."

Instantly, the Missionary's face lighted up, the relief of recognition dissipating the shadow that had hov-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

ered there since this accidental meeting, when he realized that the lives or liberty of two helpless women perhaps rested upon his rash faith and on one rifle.

"Running Bird!" he cried, riding forward. The two men shook hands, Hugh Hunt with unaffected heartiness, the young Indian with grave ceremoniousness. The rest of the band remained passive during this meeting of the friends, making no movement, hostile or otherwise. "You are also far from home."

"Not so far as I shall be when the sun sets again," said the young Chief, meaningly.

"What do you mean, Running Bird?" said the Missionary, a sternness creeping into his voice. "And why are you so far away from your home? Did the Major grant you leave of absence and sanction this hideous putting on of the garments of the unbeliever? Your Elder Brother does n't know you decked out as you are. Have you forgotten?"

"The son of Little Thunder does not forget," said the Indian, gravely. "When he hears the echo of the white man's tread in the hills, he remembers Ash Hollow. There are many who do not forget."

"Where are you going now?"

"The son of Little Thunder is a free man," said Running Bird, calmly. "Who says to the wind, 'Whither goest thou?'"

Almost numb with dread as she was, Katharine yet looked at the young Indian in astonishment not unmingled with admiration. The voice was musical, the language good, the spirit of it irresistibly appealing.

ON THE ROAD

"But I who am sent by the White Robe, I who am trying to teach you the way of our Elder Brother when he said, 'When ye pray say, *Our Father*,' I ask you, Running Bird, whither goest thou?"

Immediately there were guttural sounds of disapproval from the throats of a number of the band, showing that their leader was not the only one who understood English. They fell to discussing the matter in Dakota with some excitement, during the progress of which their unintelligible speech and earnest gesticulations were most alarming to the two women.

"Why push the matter?" counselled Locke, in a low voice. "Our friends are extremely nervous. This is their first experience. Mrs. Mendenhall is on the verge of a collapse. Major Mendenhall will doubtless send out at once to reclaim this truant band, if they are bent on an errand of mischief. Let us wish them God-speed and part company at once."

"The ladies need have no fear," said Hugh Hunt, turning to them, confidently. "Running Bird is my friend. I have broken bread with him. I have slept in his lodge. We are among friends."

"But can one vouch for a corresponding good-will on the part of this fellow's followers?" argued Locke, wisely. "I confess to an ignorance of their manners and customs; but if they were white men now, I should say that some of them had been drinking. In the East, they tell me fire-water plays the devil with your Tetons."

The Missionary bowed his head in thought; then he raised it with a quiet finality that saw no other way.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Running Bird is a great leader among the young men. I trust him absolutely. It is not the braves who are the stumbling block in the way of civilization and Christianity among the Dakotas, but the medicine men. I see Sitting Bull's wily and malevolent influence behind this movement — his and that of others of his vicious pretensions to occult knowledge of the mysteries. Theirs is the evil genius that keeps in active ferment resistance to the white man's ways and the white man's God. The poison is in the air. It has travelled rapidly on the wind from the western pot where it was brewed. It has tainted even the peaceful Santees, Yanktons and Yanktonais. Can we wonder to find the restless Brules affected? Who can say where the contagion will not spread?"

"Our wise men tell us," said the Chief, at last, "that the spirits have warned them that the Great Father will not keep faith with the Indian. The Great Father's children want our land. He loves his children. He will give them the land. But we will keep our land. There is nowhere else for the Indian to go. Once our fathers hunted in the land of the rising sun. But the Great Father drove them across the big river. Where now shall he send us? We will keep our land. Tell Major Mendenhall I shake hands with him and we will return in twelve sleeps."

"The Great Father has promised. Can you not trust him?"

"Our wise men tell us that he will not keep faith," persisted Running Bird, stubbornly.

ON THE ROAD

"Your *wakan*-men lie when they pretend to propitiate demons by barbarous rites and outlandish dances and incantations. You know that. Are they not lying when they say that our Great Father at Washington does not love his red children? Has he not kept Red Cloud's treaty faithfully?"

"But many bands of Dakotas are gathering. They are all afraid. He has sent his great War Chief to invade our land."

"May it not be to keep out white invaders that your father sends his War Chief to the Black Hills so that the land may be held inviolate for the Dakota nation? And will you, who have sworn friendship to me, and through me to my people, will you then throw it all away and link yourselves with those wild tribes of your race who know not what they do, or join those worse bands of robbers and murderers, who, perhaps, knowing, yet do not care, thus calling down the just wrath and vengeance of the Government upon you — and often misunderstanding, and punishment to innocent ones?"

"I do not know how it will be. I will talk with my young men. My brother has a smooth tongue. Doubtless he speaks truth," said the Indian politely. "But if the white War Chief steals our land, then I shall know that the white man's God is not the Indian's God. We shall see."

"These gentlewomen are Major Mendenhall's wife and daughter, Running Bird."

"I shake hands with Major Mendenhall's wife and daughter," said the chief, gravely.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Instantly, there was commotion. The Indians seemed to be insisting on something, and punctuating their demands with violent gestures of command; and when our little party started forward, the red of the angry sunset shining in their faces and making the abundant hair of Katharine Mendenhall to shine with the gleam of real gold, they closed in around them and stopped them from further progress, keeping up a continuous chatter in their native tongue all the while. When a hand was laid on Katharine's bridle rein, Locke Raynor's fighting blood leaped to the surface and he struck down the dusky arm, angrily, and then jerked his rifle free.

"Now, sir," he cried, sharply, "show your colors! You said you would fight!"

But above the sudden tumult, Running Bird began to speak. He spoke directly to the Missionary. Was there something of contempt in his voice?

"Let your young man put down his gun. He does not understand. My young men want only that you lodge with us this sleep. They want the sunny-haired one to rest with them a little. They mean her no harm. They will make a feast. They are glad the Agent's wife and daughter are come. They will make a feast and the wife and daughter will lodge in the tipi."

"Oh, no, no," cried Katharine, in terror. "Oh, please, no! We must go on. We cannot stay with you, Mr.—Mr.—Running Bird. We must go on, must n't we?" she cried, appealingly, to her friends.

"I will tell my young men," said the chief, simply.

ON THE ROAD

"You have passed the good place for your camp. Here one spot is as good as another. All-bad."

He said something to them in their own language. One or two cast mutinous glances toward the whites, but without a word in reply the whole company rode forward out of the valley. Soon the last feather had disappeared behind the bluff. There was something of majesty in the slow, silent slipping away. When they had entirely gone, the sun was set and the afterglow glared redly and threateningly through rifts of ragged cloud banks. The gloom of approaching night and storm, and the shadow left by the unexpected meeting with errant Indians, together with the solemnity of the vast, surrounding space, settled down upon the wanderers. The Major's sorely tried little wife broke down and cried, softly.

"Please don't, little mother," comforted Katharine. "They are gone now, and we are safe. And to-morrow, if all goes well, we shall sleep at home."

"I know they will come back!" wailed Mrs. Mendenhall.

"Many of them are friendly Indians," volunteered the Missionary. "This demonstration was not a real war party. They desire only to show what they would do if the Government breaks faith with them."

"Odd way of showing it — decking themselves out like devils," said Locke Raynor, curtly.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORM

THAT night a great storm broke over them. They had chosen their camp so late that they had not had time to choose it wisely. They had wandered slightly from the trail, and found themselves once more close to the river. Their only protection was the small trees growing out of the low, damp, sandy shore. The thunder was terrific, peal following peal with a continuity that was awful. The incessant lightning luridly illumined the angry, drifting, boiling clouds. A wild wind sprang up and leaped to earth with a roar that well-nigh equalled the crack of the thunder. It lashed the river until the water cried aloud and rushed moaning down its course. The trees rocked and groaned and cracked. And to increase the discomfort of the campers, innumerable sand-fleas bit and stung.

"The rain will soon be here!" cried Locke Raynor, above the tumult of the elements.

At that moment a figure appeared in the flickering light of the wind-blown camp-fire. Wrapped in an Indian blanket, standing there tall and straight, he seemed like some incarnate spirit of the storm. Although divested of much of his finery of the earlier evening, his

T H E S T O R M

war bonnet discarded, in place of which quivered a single eagle's feather, his face cleansed of its paint, yet his splendid form, lean and sinewy, could not be mistaken even had he not retained the striking necklace of bears' claws around his throat.

"The rain is coming. It will beat the sunny-haired one into the sand. It is not well for him sent of the White Robe to be in the storm. The Dakota asks the white man to come to his camp out of the storm."

His voice though not loud was clear and rose above the sounding river, the roar of the trees, and the crash of the thunder.

"What say you?" cried Hugh Hunt to his companions.

"Have a care!" warned Locke Raynor. "May it not be a trap?"

Out of the shadow crept the sunny-haired one. Katharine Mendenhall had wrestled with her childish terror and frantic grasping after the established order of her life, there in the darkness and the storm, and had worsted them, so that they slunk away and were carried whining down the turbulent river.

"Running Bird," she asked, firmly, "have you a tent?"

"Yes, Sun-in-the-hair."

"Is it far?"

"The storm was coming. We did not go far. Our camp is down in the thick willows."

"We will go at once," said Katharine.

"Miss Mendenhall," began Locke, seriously.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Lead the way, Running Bird," said Katharine, determinedly. "My mother cannot live through this night unless we have shelter. Let us hasten!"

Running Bird turned and silently slipped into the darkness. They followed him with great difficulty, so swift and sure was his own step, so halting and groping theirs. When at last the gleam of the Indian fires shone before them with myriads of sparks shot by the gale darting hither and yon and skyward, and dusky forms lounged in their light, Running Bird paused and waited for the whites to join him.

"Let your young man be poor in words this night," he said, moodily, to the priest, in his own language. "My young men have swallowed the red fire in the water the white man makes to destroy his Indian children. Your young man talks too much."

He would have gone on his way without further speech but Hugh Hunt stopped him.

"Who has done this thing, my brother? Who has broken the law of the great wise Father who knows the poison that is in the fire-water, and wills not that the Dakotas drink it to their undoing? He will punish the evil-doer."

The priest's voice was searching but vibrant with feeling, too. He yearned mightily after this proud, bitter, strong, manly man. Perhaps it was he who had won the Missionary's passionate appeal for his simple manhood to be left to him because it was his great glory. Running Bird pondered a moment and then answered with gloomy, unconscious irony:

T H E S T O R M

"The Slender Ash is very credulous. He believes many things which are not true. How then shall we know that his *wakan* stories are true — his Christ man and his cross? I should like to believe them because the Slender Ash believes them; but the Slender Ash believes the Great Father did not mean Ash Hollow, and that he is sorry. He believes the Great Father does not want the Dakotas to drink fire-water. Why, then, does he let bad men bring it to us and demand skins and meat and gold in return. Is the Great Father afraid or is he a woman? The Slender Ash believes that the Great Father knows the poison in fire-water. Why then does the Great Father allow it to be made? The Slender Ash believes lies," he concluded, dispassionately.

"But you are sad because your young men are drunk with it," persisted Hugh, disregarding the first warning beat of rain drops upon his uplifted face.

"My heart is very heavy because of it," said the Indian.

"Then tell me who did it, Running Bird," pleaded Hugh, "for I, too, am heavy in my heart because of it."

"I will tell you, then, because you have eaten with me and slept with me and are my friend. Peter Dorsey sold it to Mad Wolf for a fine buffalo skin of the early Winter's scraping. Mad Wolf traded for it when my eyes were gone from me for a little while seeking which way the son of Little Thunder should lead his Dakotas."

He shook off the priest's hold gently and was gone.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"I — I — can't," moaned Mrs. Mendenhall. "Let us go back!"

Even Katharine hesitated, shuddering, her face showing pale and pinched when the lightning flared. Though none realized the actual danger so well as the priest because they had understood nothing of the conversation, they faltered. The group around the fire was growing noisy. The men still retained their warlike habiliments. Running Bird alone, in deference to the white man, had thrown his aside.

"What shall we do, Mr. Hunt?" asked Katharine, helplessly.

"Trust Running Bird," he returned, simply.

"And I can fight," said Locke, grimly.

A literal sheet of water falling at that moment and wrapping them in its dripping folds decided them. Without further words, they hastened forward and were once more in the presence of the savages. Calmly, unquestioningly, absolutely, they gave themselves into the keeping of Running Bird, son of Little Thunder, a hereditary chief of the Brule Sioux.

The thick growth of willows of the Indians' camping ground shut out much of the rain and wind, and the tipis were waterproof. There were two of these and one was given over entirely to the use of Hugh Hunt and his friends. But there was little sleep. Perhaps all but the Missionary feared treachery. All night the trees rocked and groaned, with nothing to keep out their terrible sounding but smoke-blackened and weather-stained canvas walls, and the groaning served as a

THE STORM

weird accompaniment to the all-night carousal of the drunken Indians in the other tipi. The call to make a showing against white encroachment on the Great Reservation had been enough to stir their blood to white heat. The drink had made them mad. After an unusually loud burst of thunder, when the mystery that rode it like a god had partially sobered their superstitious souls until they quaked in fear, Mad Wolf arose and harangued them. He told them that the thunder was telling them to kill the white man before he snatched away their land and made slaves of their warriors, who must then do women's work, for the white man said so. The thunder was very angry with them that they should so disgrace the once free and brave hunters and warriors of the Dakota people by consenting to become like women and labor with their hands. If they did not drive out the white man, the Great Spirit would strike down their fairest daughters and their bravest sons. Before entering upon this war trail, he had sought out Yellow Owl, and this great prophet had told him that he had communed with the Wakinyan,* and that the Wakinyan had told him to drive out the invaders or a pestilence would creep into the lodges of his people and make them houses of mourning, and the buffalo would drop dead and waste away so that famine would make their bellies yawn with emptiness. Yellow Owl had likewise told him that the thunder would speak this very night and tell him, Mad Wolf, what to do. The thunder had spoken.

* The Dakotas' chief war gods whose voice was the thunder.

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

He glided forward with a peculiar snarl; and then, hour after hour, to the dreary monotony of the tom-tom, the Indians danced their war dance. Hugh Hunt still contended, however, that this was not a war party.

"Patience!" he said to the trembling women, who listened terror-stricken to the hideous noise. "The night is already far spent. We are warm and dry. That is much to be thankful for. Their orgie will not outlast the night."

It was with extreme difficulty that he restrained Locke Raynor from slipping out of the tent and seeking an interview with someone in authority. For to the Eastern man, it seemed as if all that hysterical outcry must lead to, if indeed it was not a deliberate preparation for, some sacrifice of fanaticism to appease an outraged deity of the thunder. On that altar, human sacrifice had been done in the barbarous past. Who could say for a surety that it would not be done again? It was only after the priest had interpreted to him Running Bird's friendly warning of the earlier night, that he finally consented to wait for the day before issuing forth from the kindly shelter of the Chief's hospitality.

Mingling with all the other furious rackets, the wind-lashed river roared all night long, even after the rain ceased and the roll of the thunder became first a distant growl and at last died away altogether; and morning found its heaving surface flecked with masses of muddy, beaten foam, all journeying to the south.

In the wet, haggard, first light, when it was strangely

T H E S T O R M

still in the other tipi, where the bucks had at last sunk to the ground in sheer exhaustion, Katharine peering out could distinguish the form of Running Bird pacing thoughtfully up and down between the two tipis. Wonderfully comforted, she fell asleep. When she awoke, she found her mother asleep, at last worn out by the strain of her fears. Locke Raynor also slept, his strong young face resting on his arm. He looked strangely boyish and untroubled in his slumber, despite the rifle lying close to his side. The Missionary was gone. Creeping to the opening, she again looked out. The sun was just rising. The morning was wet and sweet and cool after the storm. Someone was trying to make a fire with damp wood. It smoked distressingly but struggled gallantly to keep alive. Running Bird came and stood over it feeding it carefully. Another stalwart Indian leaned near by against a tree. He, too, this morning, was cleansed of his paint. He was speaking but he spoke in a strange tongue so that she comprehended nothing. His face was inscrutable.

“He struck Mad Wolf,” this man was saying to his chief, “and then he laughed out of his lazy eyes. Mad Wolf does not forget. Last night Wakinyan spoke to me in the loud thunder and then I dreamed. I dreamed that the white warriors followed the white War Chief into the Hills. And then came this proud one—my enemy. I dreamed of gold—much gold. It came in yellow streams from the inner earth. At first the spirits were very angry because we had let the white man in. But I, too, went in, and I killed my enemy so that the

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

spirits were not angry any more. They helped the Dakotas to kill all their enemies. After a while, a beautiful young woman floated down from a cloud and sat upon the highest peak of all. Where she put her right hand, the gold that the white man loves poured forth. Where she put her left hand, deer leaped to their feet so that there was never a famine but always fat hunting. This was because the Great Spirit was pleased with his children because they did not tamely submit to be driven any more."

Katharine thought the speech troubled the Chief. His eyes had grown very sombre and he looked all at once like an old man, though the priest had said he was younger than he, and the priest was in his prime.

Their sobered hosts were reluctant to let the white guests go. They pressed them to eat more of the breakfast they had prepared. It was an excellent one. They made of it a feast to honor the Agent's wife and daughter. Some one had been out on the prairie early and returned with a plump grouse as an appetizing evidence of his hunting prowess. When at last Hugh Hunt insisted that the time for parting had come, and turned his face resolutely toward the trail, which had been lost, the Indians leaped to their own ponies and formed a close escort thither. They even followed for some distance after the original trail had been recovered. Such strict espionage might have become burdensome, but just as Hugh Hunt was beginning to hope that the band had decided to return to the Agency with him, and Locke Raynor had settled down into a

THE STORM

humorous acceptance of the situation, the insistent escort wheeled, and, with no word of farewell and seemingly without preconcerted plan or present signal, began racing back to camp. Running Bird alone halted for a last word. He received the Missionary's benediction in silence; but a lighting of his sombre eyes was a suggestion that his unresponsiveness might be only an assumed stoicism.

"When shall I see you again, Running Bird?" asked the Missionary.

"In twelve sleeps," answered the Indian, imperturbably.

"Good-bye, Running Bird," said Katharine, obeying a sudden impulse, and extending her hand to the Indian. "You have been very good to us. We shall not forget it. I — shall never be afraid of you again."

It was a childish speech and she laughed at herself in saying it; but Hugh Hunt glanced at her approvingly and smiled, well pleased. There was a glint of amusement in the Chief's eyes but he only said:

"Good-bye, Sunny-haired One," and rode away.

Turning presently to see if he had disappeared, Hugh Hunt saw that he had ridden but a trifling distance and stopped, and was now, erect and motionless on his still pony, gazing long and earnestly after the white party moving rapidly into the north.

CHAPTER V

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

“**A**ND so that outfit of unlicensed traders is still on the Reservation,” said the Missionary, thoughtfully, when a dip in the road at last lost the Indian to view. “It is very strange. They left, or at least made pretence of leaving, by order of Major Mendenhall, before I went to meet the Indians’ Apostle. I told my Bishop that they were gone. He was very glad. And now they are not gone.” His face clouded.

“Do not be disheartened,” said Katharine, softly. “They must go, must they not, if my father says so?”

“Your father has said — and yet they are not gone,” vouchsafed Locke Raynor, carelessly.

“They have doubtless slipped back without my father’s knowledge,” said Katharine, with a simple dignity that became her well, with its faintly implied rebuke to a hint of criticism contained in the young fellow’s carelessly spoken words. “I shall inform him of their presence immediately upon our arrival at the Agency. Mr. Hunt, why did Running Bird call you The Slender Ash?”

“That is the name the Indians have given me because I am straight and slim. They usually name people

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

from some personal peculiarity. For instance, they call your father, Big Neck, and you remember Running Bird called you Sun-in-the-hair."

"I am beginning to think we shall never arrive," said Mrs. Mendenhall, plaintively. "What with Indians and storms and bandits and — and — mud," as her horse slipped down a gumbo incline, "nothing but a miracle can land us there in safety. However, I am resigned. I said I should not complain, and I shall not. But I wish —"

"That the days of miracles were not ended?" interrupted Katharine, smilingly.

"I wish that I could be convinced," she said, glancing nervously over her shoulder, "that that spitfire savage was not following us. Do you suppose now that he has made a detour and is waiting for us behind that rise in front? He could do it. They are such reckless riders — those savages."

"Have I not told you," said Hugh Hunt, patiently, "that Running Bird is a good Indian? Did you not notice that he — almost alone — was altogether free from the abominable fire-water? And if he were not friendly to us would he have told of the presence of the whiskey smugglers?"

"Has there been much of it — this illicit sale of whiskey?" asked Locke Raynor, with an indifference which might have been assumed.

"Enough to make it secondary only to Yellow Owl and his priesthood of sorcerers and magic-mongers as a deadening influence against Christian civilization."

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Yellow Owl — who is Yellow Owl?" asked Locke, curiously.

"Yellow Owl? Outwardly, he is a medicine man of the Dakotas. Inwardly, he is the devil incarnate," said the young priest, deliberately.

"And who are these smugglers who have squatted on the Reservation with no right but their own insolent will, and who sell liquor to the wards of the United States Government in flagrant defiance of its laws? You will forgive my inquisitiveness. Since I am to reside among the Indians, I am naturally interested in what concerns them."

"They are the flotsam and jetsam of civilization and, cast adrift, they float shoreward and pollute those who grasp after them."

"But if they are flotsam and jetsam," said Locke, quaintly, "they are confiscate to the king. Therefore — out they go. Do you know them by name?"

"There are several of them. They go by the name of the Dorsey gang."

The coolness attendant upon the passing of the storm more than compensated for the heavier roads, and the wayfarers entered upon the home stretch with a fine vigor and a perceptible uplift of spirit. The unobstructed sun of several days had done its work well and had stored away so many of its pigments in Katharine's usually almost transparent skin that her face had taken on a dusky olive tint, with here and there a piquant freckle. Much of the discontent that had at first clouded the frank charm of it had given right of

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

way to the irresistible lure of the winy air and the appeal of the sighted end of a long journey. She was so constitutionally strong that she could forget the fatigue, and the fear of the road left behind, in rallying her forces for the triumphant finish. Forgetfulness made her strangely beautiful. Her eyes were brilliant with the joy of life and health and youth. The cool wind blowing off a spent cloud-bank on the northern hills ruffled her hair and individualized gleaming strands of gold. She led the way, setting a new pace at a brisk canter on the high grassy trail, with the Missionary maintaining the place by her side. The way had opened so that the boundaries of the level trail were only as one cared to limit them. Riding behind with the Agent's wife, Locke Raynor kept his eyes on the joyous figure in front of him while sustaining his share of the polite but desultory conversation with his companion. He was a well-knit young fellow, his athletic bearing and perfectly controlled movements showing the training of University gridiron and boating crew rather than that of labor or of one born to the out-of-doors. He was rather slightly built but not spare like Hugh Hunt. His muscular development saved him from being thin. He owed that to the American institution—that as well as his rugged patriotism, his republican ideals, and his sane scholarship. But an elusive Old World charm that sometimes showed itself in speech or manner, perhaps he owed to Heidelberg. He had a smooth, good-looking, well-bred face with clear, innocent-looking gray eyes, just

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

a trifle introspective, perhaps, and reserved. He wore a white felt hat pushed back from his forehead so that there was no concealment whatsoever in his contemplative perusal of Katharine's graceful poise and her shining hair. With him there was a haunting remembrance of that first night when she arose out of shadow and came to him in the light of the glowing drift log because the melancholy howl of the wolves made her homesick. Would the wilderness be kind to such as she?

Near American Creek crossing, they halted at a dingy and unpromising-looking road-house for rest and possible refreshment. Its forlorn exterior did not belie the comfort within, for there was no comfort within. The room was close and hot and drearily bare. The man who ushered them into it was slow of movement and unkempt as to appearance. He proceeded leisurely to make himself comfortable in a chair tipped against the wall. Plainly, the prospects for dinner were not cheering.

"Can you get us something to eat?" asked Locke, observing with some surprise that the Missionary did not seem disposed to assume the initiative.

"I reckon Pete kin stir ye up somethin' when he comes in. He's boss of the grub just now. He'll be in in a minute."

"We have so little time to waste — don't you suppose now that you might urge Pete to hasten some?" asked Locke, persuasively. "We shall not be particular — a little tea for the gentlewomen, perhaps, and then if Mrs. Mendenhall might lie down for an hour —"

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

"You 'll have to see Pete," said the man, stubbornly.

"And who is Pete? Where shall I find Pete?"

"Oh, Pete 's just Pete," responded the man, glancing casually at the Missionary as he spoke.

"I thought you had left the Reservation," said the Missionary, suddenly.

"It is you who are delaying me," said the man, a little gruffly.

A wave of light broke in upon Locke Raynor's understanding. He suddenly became very still — waiting.

"If you are really leaving once and for all, where are your goods and where is your accursed brew?" asked the Missionary.

"Now see here, Mr. Hunt," expostulated the man, good-naturedly, "ain't you showin' an undue curiosity as to my personal affairs? I leave it to you, fair and square — now ain't you?"

"You received Major Mendenhall's ultimatum, did you not?" asked Hugh, patiently. "Why, then, don't you go? You promised that you would go."

At that moment, a second man sauntered into the room and stood slouchingly near the door.

"So we will go — when the spirit moves us," he spoke up, impudently. He was much younger than the first man and might have been his son. He had the same shock of sun-burned, ragged-looking hair, the same pale, narrow eyes. "You Bible men make me tired, anyway," he went on, rapidly. "You bring a new creed to the Injuns. Do they want it? Not they. They

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

have n't the least use for it. They are better off without it. They fight it tooth and nail. It keeps things stirred up all the time. They hate it worse'n poison. They do murder because of it. But do we say to you, Git out? Not we. That's your business. If you want to sell your goods for that price, why, it's up to you. It's not our affair. Here are we—free citizens of the United States—come to trade with the Injuns. We were here long before you were. Do they want our trade? Ask them. What right has Uncle Sam to come between us and our legitimate business? He says we ain't licensed traders. Ugh! We've been out here makin' friends and barterin' with the Injuns since long before ever he dared to send a representative among 'em unless accompanied by whole regiments of soldiers. I reckon that's license enough for me. Now then, if we leave you alone, why can't you leave us alone, Mr. Preacher-man? Specially since the Injuns want us and don't want you? Isn't this their land? Did n't Uncle Sam give it to them plunk out?"

"You know only too well why you can never be licensed traders," responded the priest, sternly. "You make pretence of dealing in harmless commodities—beads and the like—and lead the Government a merry chase trying to run down your unauthorized traffic, while you know and I know that it is all a game to hide your iniquitous fire-water exchange. You have not permission to be one day on this Reservation. It will be well for you to leave before Major Mendenhall learns of your delinquency."

THE END OF THE JOURNEY.

"Who is there to make us go?" asked the trader, insolently.

"I am here," said the Missionary, quietly, lifting his great heavy eyes to his interlocutor's face.

The two men burst into boisterous laughter.

"We can well understand that," cried the insolent one. "We can well understand that the Major will have no more backbone than to send a preacher to persuade us for God's sake to go away. Well, we'll treat you fine when you come to see us, friend. We may have our faults, but we won't hurt you. I know you well enough to prophesy that you will come slipping in without so much as a jack-knife about you for an emergency. But I'm not an Injun, so you will be as safe in my dugout as in your own meetin' house. My pride wouldn't let me hurt an unarmed man, even if he does sass me in my own home. *Au revoir*, then, till you are sent out on police duty. Or are you waiting for something to eat?"

"I am already sent," said Hugh, calmly. "If not to-day, then to-morrow — make ready."

"Who sent you?" asked the man, curiously. "What authority have you?"

A strange, electric thrill passed through the young priest as he recalled vividly the scene in the gay, careless, little capital city when, kneeling weary and overborne for the Missionary Bishop's blessing, that high priest had told him how, when he was first introduced to a military officer as the Missionary Bishop to the Indians, the officer bluntly remarked: "Indeed! I don't

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

envy you your task." His eyes burned even yet, remembering the infinite tenderness with which the Bishop raised him and whispered, his fine scholarly face even then pinched with the malady that was to make all his after saintly life one great shining sacrifice, "But I—I so envied you your task, Hugh Hunt, that I have come to share it. It is you who have borne the burden and heat of the day, but I have come to help you through the long afternoon of it—and you will not grudge me my penny, Hugh Hunt. God's peace be with you forever and ever."

It was then that Hugh Hunt forgot that he had ever been tired or overborne. With that benign influence still strong upon him, he answered simply:

"I am from the Apostle to the Indians—him whom my people call the White Robe."

"Oh, well," interrupted the first man, conciliatingly, "who said anything about sellin' liquor, anyway? This here little fun has gone far enough. There's a deal o' difference between sellin' whiskey to Injuns agin the Government's say-so and keepin' a road-house for the accommodation of the Government's mail carriers and travellin' public. When the Major said to git, there was nothin' for it but to git, though we don't acknowledge there's anything to git for. He said we sold fire-water to the Injuns. How does he know? He's prejudiced agin us and feels a little high and mighty, too, 'cause I'm a squaw-man, I reckon. But we got. And here you find us flippin' flapjacks. We're runnin' this stage-house now. We was just coddin' you, Mr.

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

Hunt. You know me. I ain't got much faith in your cloth and that's what made me and Pete tired when you went to preachin' to us. But I think a lot o' you as a man. Shake on that."

Hugh Hunt shook hands with him gravely. There was an ingenuous smile on the grizzled face that was disarming, and yet the Missionary wished with all his heart that the quondam liquor smuggler were — anywhere, just so the Indian country should know him no more.

"Is this true — what you are telling me?" he asked, earnestly.

"True as Gospel. If you've got a Bible handy I'll swear on that. That ought to make my oath strong enough — for you."

"When did you sell your last stuff?" asked Hugh, unexpectedly.

The man eyed him narrowly for a moment; then his face relaxed from its mask of quick surly suspicion and became cheerful once more.

"Day before yesterday," he grinned, serenely.

"Are you quite sure that you have 'got' far enough?"

The voice was soft, slow, almost drawling. The unexpected question focussed the attention of all upon the undisturbed face of Locke Raynor. He acknowledged the sudden interest with a deprecating smile.

"Bless my soul, and who do you think you are?" demanded the new proprietor of the road-house in undisguised astonishment. He had given but slight notice hitherto to the rather silent member of the party, whose

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

slightly bored expression had gone far toward engendering such carelessness on his part.

"I slept last night with Indians mad drunk with whiskey," said Locke, still drawlingly. "And I have the names of those from whom that whiskey was obtained, and I should think the sooner those persons left this Reservation the better it would be for them. I seem to recognize in myself the symptoms of an intention to back this priest and Major Mendenhall in their laudable stand for law and order in the Indian country. I should think that one of the first things which would have to go would be whiskey. Good-day to you. We do not care for any dinner to-day, I believe, and we are already rested."

"Perhaps you would like to fight it out now?" demanded the insolent one, with a threatening gesture.

"Oh, no!" cried Katharine, involuntarily.

"Assuredly not," said Locke, composedly. "I work for Major Mendenhall at the Agency, if you should desire to come to see me later. But you need not trouble yourself. I shall do myself the honor of calling upon you soon. What a pity, now, if you should be already gone and a 'To let' card up — but what a vast amount of trouble it would save, to be sure. Again, good-day."

They saw no one else that day. Late in the afternoon, they forded a deep, turbulent creek and entered a small forest of huge, river-grown trees. After the scorch of the already searing upper trail, the restful gloom was exceedingly grateful to the tired travellers. Still a little later, emerging therefrom, they beheld the forbidding

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

stockade walls of the fortified Agency. There had been no runner to apprise the Major of their approach. The gates were closed. A deep, serene stillness brooded over all the evening landscape.

“We have come home, mother,” said Katharine, a little sob in her throat.

CHAPTER VI

“ THE LITTLE OX LIES STRUGGLING ON THE EARTH ”

THE mother of Wa-hcá-ska — which interpreted signifies White Flower — crouched by the side of the pallet of buffalo skins whereon lay this maid of the Dakotas. Her body rocked to and fro in monotonous repetition, while she moaned, “ Wa-hcá-ska ! ” and again, “ Wa-hcá-ska ! ” But the White Flower was deaf to her lament. Stricken with a fever, she could only toss her restless head, with its matted strings of black hair, back and forth upon the rude couch.

For the moment, the squaw mother was alone with her sick. Chief Black Tomahawk had himself gone to the extreme confines of the camp — now almost a deserted village since Summer had scattered these nomads for the hunting — personally and humbly to solicit the professional services of Yellow Owl, after the messengers sent by the chief had returned with the report that the great doctor had given no heed to their supplications but seemed to be in a trance, having apparently eaten nothing for days nor walked out among the people. No less *wakan* power than that of Yellow Owl himself, the greatest medicine man of his time, perhaps, barring the crafty, low-caste Sitting Bull, could avail Black

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

Tomahawk's daughter now, Wa-hcá-ska, his little White Flower, heart of his heart and pride of his heart. His sons were dead. Nothing was left to this proud, failing chief of a proud, failing people, but memories and Wa-hcá-ska. He could not even dream as his sons had dreamed before they were called away from their brief span of life; for he was a wise old man, and he knew that his day was done. If these sons had lived, perhaps — so many things are possible when the eye is bright, the step quick, faith high, and the passion for perfect liberty preëminent. But, no — they were dreamers — all those young men gathering in secret to resent the white man's invasion were dreamers like his sons who were dead. Running Bird, the son of Chief Little Thunder of that Brule band who were friendly once to the usurpers, was a dreamer. He had been a dreamer since Ash Hollow. Wa-hcá-ska was a dreamer when she so passionately rebelled against the white man's teaching at the mission boarding-school that had been stealing away the hearts of so many Indian children since the pale young man had come to the Agency out of the East — from farther away, Black Tomahawk had been told, than lived the great White Father at Washington. Such a dreamer was Wa-hcá-ska that no persuasion on the part of the Missionary or of the Agent, whom the people called Tahu Tanka (Big Neck) could induce her to alter her fixed determination never to go back. In his heart, Black Tomahawk was glad that Wa-hcá-ska was a dreamer. He himself listened no more to the voices of the visionaries,

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

tre of the tent. Suddenly his eyes began to glitter. He stripped off his clothes until he stood naked except for the middle cloth. His lethargy disappeared as if indeed by magic. A wild excitement slipped into its place so quickly that the transition would have puzzled any but an Indian who believed that the medicine man was receiving his inspiration from *Wakantanka*.

"Wa-hcá-ska! Wa-hcá-ska!" cried the mother, frantically, but no one paid any attention to her. The old, old woman fell a-trembling so that the stew in the bowl slopped over onto the floor, but neither did any one pay attention to her. It was close and warm in the tent, so warm that the medicine man's fine, sinewy body shone with the moisture of his effort.

"Flying god-like I encircle the heavens;
I enlighten the earth to its centre.
The little ox lies struggling on the earth,
I lay my arrow to the string."

Over and over he chanted the weird boast of the god in him to the rattling accompaniment of a gourd shell.

"The little ox lies struggling on the earth," he chanted in the Dakota language.

"Wa-hcá-ska! Wa-hcá-ska!" shrieked the mother.

The *wakan*-man had worked himself into a frenzy of religious ardor. Hideous, indescribable noises proceeded from his throat. Suddenly, muttering more distinctly these words: "The god told me that having this I might approach even a skeleton and set it on its feet," he fell upon his knees and put his mouth to the

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

girl's throbbing temples and sucked with a marvellous energy, never ceasing the violent shaking of the gourd. Humbler physicians had long since administered emetics under the erroneous supposition that there was some offending substance in the girl's stomach. Not so would the great doctor do. He despised the aid of herbs. He would rely altogether upon the favor and direction of his patron gods.

Chief Black Tomahawk preserved his Indian stoicism during this ceremony, outwardly at least. In his heart he was saying that if Wa-hcá-ska lived, Yellow Owl should have two ponies, or a fine buffalo robe, or Wa-hcá-ska should fashion for him such a medicine pouch as never was before—a gift worthy a chief's giving and a god's accepting. If Wa-hcá-ska lived! It was at that moment that another figure darkened the doorway. No one paid any attention to him, either. He did not push into the room but remained near the entrance, a splendid figure of a man, straight as an arrow, broad of shoulder, lean of hip, with a handsome, haughty countenance, thin lips, a prominent nose, his black hair dressed with but a single feather. Sometime, somewhere, this silent, self-centred man had killed and carried away the prize of the killing and, reverting to the traditions of his race, claimed and cherished with a savage satisfaction the right to wear a single eagle's feather.

Finally, Yellow Owl staggered to his feet, blinded and dizzy from the tremendous exertion. The god in him had pumped out the disease in the Chief's White Flower. But it was not yet vanquished. It had left the sufferer,

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

the "Little struggling ox," but he had heroically taken it into his own system and had still to contend with it, and not only to relieve himself of the unwelcome presence but to discover and annihilate the spirit of the sin which had caused Wa-hcá-ska to be so grievously afflicted. He was apparently in great agony. It was still day and his groans could be heard a half-mile away, where many, hearing, understood that the great *wakan*-man was wrestling with an evil spirit. He writhed, struck his sides, beat the earth with his feet, always holding a basin of water to his mouth in which he was presumably depositing that which had been drawn from the sick girl. This part of the performance was accompanied by a suggestive, sing-song bubbling.

These rites continued for hours, until the late dusk of the Summer night crept into the camp, and fires began gleaming fitfully through the darkening atmosphere. Occasionally, the doctor rested; never for long. The ancient grandmother crept out and kindled the fire. It sprang up red. Shadows flickered on the walls of the tipi. Wa-hcá-ska had fallen asleep, the hideous clamor failing finally to penetrate her drowsy senses. The men who had followed Yellow Owl into the tipi squatted, watchful, on the outskirts. Smoke Woman, the mother, still moaned, but at longer intervals. Wa-hcá-ska had not closed her eyes for three sleeps. Smoke Woman saw hope in this slumber. The tall Indian by the door stood as straight, as uncompromisingly taciturn, as when he first came. Others had come and gone, had shifted their positions — he had scarcely moved.

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

A change came over the prophet. He was approaching his great climax. A new excitement flashed from his eyes. At last he saw the spirit of that sin which had sickened Wa-hcá-ska. It rushed into the lodge, laid violent hold of the sleeping princess as if to rend her to pieces. But the watchful and inspired *wakan*-man was equal to the occasion. This was what he had been striving for. This was what would make his power among his people more than ever a despotism. This was what would bring such wavering ones as Running Bird back from the lure of that White Robe who sent the young pale-face to babble a pleasing but dangerous myth of a man on a cross and a brotherhood of red and white. This was what would rivet these erring ones again to the faith of demonolatry. For, suddenly, Wa-hcá-ska's sleep had changed from a heavy, labored stupor to a natural, easy rest. Her face was damp. Yellow Owl saw and his cunning knew that Running Bird saw, too. A telling blow he was striking against that brotherhood which meant one only because the Indian would be assimilated by the white man. If only all could see that the perpetuity of the Indian nations rested wholly upon their keeping apart! Several days ago, an elk had been sighted near the village. This was an unusual occurrence because deer and elk had been so long hunted by these nomadic tribes that they avoided, with an unerring instinct, places of human habitation. The incident, almost forgotten, proved to be Yellow Owl's opportunity. His imagination pictured the disease-monger, before turning to run away, fixing his evil eyes upon the tipi

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

of Chief Black Tomahawk. That meant disaster to some of its inmates. Taking up a piece of wood, he carved therefrom an image of an elk, and placed it in a bowl of water, close to the wailing squaws. Then he caused the four men who had followed him, to shoot at the image, one after another, in quick succession, until the rude carving was completely demolished. This was the cue for the god in the inspired doctor to leap out and fall upon, not the wretched image, but the spirit of the animal thus represented. The jugglery was crude, but to the superstitious souls of the Sioux it was a wonderful manifestation of the seer's direct communication with the realm of the *wakan*.

The sounds in the village were fast dying away. Here and there a dog barked. The camp fires had sunk to smouldering embers. It was very late. Still Wac-hcá-ska slumbered. Running Bird stepped forward. His arms were folded across his broad chest. A fire had been laid inside for light, but it, too, smouldered. In the half light, the son of a murdered chief stood, a perfect Indian. All that he had unconsciously absorbed from association with men like Hugh Hunt was as if it had never been.

"The God of the white man is—the God of the white man," he said slowly and distinctly. "He is not for us. Maybe it is true—what they tell about Him. Our stories are true, too. We listen, politely, to their tales of this Man on the Cross. He was very brave. He did not cry out at the torture. He died like an Indian. We are glad to believe it is true. But they

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

laugh at us and call our sacred traditions myths. They mean by that — lies. The white men are very rude. Wa-hcá-ska will live. The Great Spirit has been good to Chief Black Tomahawk and to Running Bird, his friend on the other side of the big river. I have seen. I am very thankful. Therefore, the son of Little Thunder will dance in the great dance of the sun, which is in four sleeps. In the morning, I return to my reservation with my young men.”

He turned abruptly, lifted the flap, and passed out into the night.

In the early dawn, White Flower awoke, sane but very weak. The fever was gone, and with it the false strength of it. She smiled, wanly, at her mother still crouched at the bed-side. The ancient one slept. So also did Black Tomahawk. Yellow Owl was gone.

“My mother,” she whispered, affectionately. “All night you have watched by me. Now you must sleep.”

“Wa-hcá-ska!” murmured the weary squaw, her fat, usually expressionless face alight with gratitude. “You will get well. You will stay with old Smoke Woman. Little bird — little dove — Wa-hcá-ska! Wa-hcá-ska!”

“Sleep, my mother. See, I sleep, for I am very tired.” She closed her eyes and was still.

Satisfying herself that the breathing was natural, Smoke Woman allowed her exhausted body to droop down on the couch, her heavy eyes closed, and she slept. But White Flower was not asleep. As soon as her mother’s regular and deep respirations proved that she

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

at last rested, White Flower opened her big dark beautiful eyes, showing the bigger and the darker for the emaciation of her face. She looked steadily at the nodding head of her grandmother and presently the aged woman awoke.

"I am hungry," murmured White Flower, softly.

"Heart of my heart must eat," said the grandmother, rising from her cramped position.

"Sh — sh — sh —," warned White Flower.

"You shall eat. Do not fear."

"Yes, my father's mother, if you say I shall eat, I shall eat. But she is tired — so tired. Do not awaken her."

"The yellow-haired one — she at the Agency — tells your mother strange tales of not eating with the fever. Your mother is a foolish woman. I heard. I did not believe. It is I who give you to eat when you are hungry whether she wakes or not," grumbled the grandmother, her old black eyes snapping fire. She left the tipi.

An hour later Smoke Woman once more was on her knees wailing the old heart-broken cry, "Wa-hcá-ska! Wa-hcá-ska!"

At noon, the long, hot noon of the virgin prairie, a tired, dusty, haggard, blanketed Indian woman appeared at the Agency and asked for Sun-in-the-hair. She spoke not a word of English. In impatient despair, the new and homesick serving maid motioned her off and went back to her work and her tears. The Indian turned quietly and despondently away. As she trudged

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

back toward the gate, something familiar in the pathetic figure attracted Katharine Mendenhall who sat by a window idly turning the pages of an unread book, and wondering how she could live through the long lonesome afternoon that stretched before her. She left the house and hastened after the plodding squaw, remembering, with a repentant pang, the sick girl whom she had gone to see several days ago at the solicitation of Hugh Hunt, and whom she had promised to visit again, and whom she had forgotten. Smoke Woman at first trudged on without heeding the hand upon her shoulder, her reception at the Agency still rankling in her Indian heart and chilling the impulse that had brought her many miles on foot through the dust to ask aid of the child of Tahu Tanka. The old distrust held her mute, though Wa-hcá-ska was again in the clutches of demoniacal spirits, and this time they bade fair to worst the medicine man. She had left him and the din of his strife with these offended spirits when she realized that the gods which inspired Yellow Owl were powerless because superior gods had ordered that Wa-hcá-ska must die. There was no one in the Sioux tribes that she knew with greater *wakan* power than Yellow Owl. If he failed, there was no hope for Wa-hcá-ska. Yet so great was her superstitious fear of the magician that she had slipped away from the camp in secret, not daring even to take a horse. If Yellow Owl knew that she was seeking white aid, he would be mortally offended and would surely avenge the insult by failing to exert his *wakan* power in behalf of Wa-hcá-ska. Nay, he would

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

go farther and call down upon herself, Smoke Woman, some terrible sickness in punishment of her crime. If he knew! But Smoke Woman did not intend that he should know. There was no hope for Wa-hcá-ska unless the white man's *Wakantanka* had inspired the white man's medicine with more healing properties than had the Indians' gods deigned to bestow upon their devotees. She would get medicine from this daughter of Tahu Tanka, who had helped Wa-hcá-ska before, and the doctor would never know. But they had laughed at her at the Agency, so now she was going back to Wa-hcá-ska, her little White Flower, whom she had left too long. Black Tomahawk and the rest thought that her grief had sent her wandering over the prairie in search of some new curative herb. Would Wa-hcá-ska be gone when she got back? The way was long. The sun was very hot. She must not falter or Wa-hcá-ska would die, and she would not be there to see her blessed spirit pass out of the tipi.

Katharine's presence, however, was compelling, actuated as she was by honest regret at her thoughtlessness. Suddenly, Smoke Woman broke forth into lamentation and explanation, not a word of which Katharine could understand but the oft-repeated, "Wa-hcá-ska! Wa-hcá-ska!" What should she do? Hugh Hunt had that morning gone down to the Lower Camp and had not yet returned. Her father had ridden out somewhere on the Reservation. The new issue clerk, Locke Raynor, was temporarily in charge, and could not leave the Agency. Besides, his knowledge of the Dakota lan-

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

guage was as embryonic as her own. Her mother was asleep. She was strangely alone in this crisis which had come to her so soon, so unasked, and so undesired. But out there, beyond the hills which sloped to the quiet, stockaded Agency, with miles of heat and dust between, a girl was dying, a beautiful girl, with restless eyes and an Indian heart; and Hugh Hunt had said to her on that never-to-be-forgotten journey up the river that her mission was to the Indian women. Now this girl was dying because she, Katharine Mendenhall, could find nothing to do to keep her from dreaming dreams of a far away but very pleasant past. Right bitterly did she regret her inability to measure up to the stature set for her. Her opportunity had come, and she had not recognized it. Memory of the night of the young priest's appeal — nay, his command — came back to her with startling distinctness as she listened in desperation to the Indian woman's unintelligible jargon, punctuated every now and then with that pitiful cry: “Wa-hcá-ska! Wa-hcá-ska!” There were the soft, dark sky, pierced with white, mysterious stars, the darker circle of trees, the smouldering camp-fire, and the awful quiet.

In despair, she turned into the little store of the post trader, dragging the unwilling Smoke Woman after her.

“Tell me what she means, Mr. Newman!” she cried, earnestly; and the grave, almost taciturn trader, whom the isolating tendencies of that greatest of internecine wars had sent West to look for a new place because the

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

old had not waited for him during those four best years of his life, given so unquestioningly to the great Republic, paused in his routine to interpret:

"Smoke Woman says that the White Flower is dying. She says, 'I am only a poor Indian woman. *Wakan-tanka* is about to take my last blossom from me. I implore the daughter of Big Neck to give me medicine so that Wa-hcá-ska may live. The old grandmother gave Wa-hcá-ska to eat of meat when I was asleep. I remembered what Sun-in-the-hair had said but the grandmother is Black Tomahawk's mother. I could do nothing. Give me the medicine of the white man, oh, Sun-in-the-hair, and let the poor Indian go!'"

"I will go back to the house for some fever drops, Mr. Newman, and will you please tell her that White Flower simply must not eat anything. Tell her that as soon as my father returns, or Mr. Hunt, we will come to her, if it is midnight. That will make no difference. And she must take the buckboard. I will have it ready in an instant."

This new thought started her toward the door, but the calm voice of the trader stayed her.

"She gives thanks for the medicine and the other things, Miss Mendenhall. She says she is very grateful; but she refuses your kindly offer of the buckboard. She insists on going back as she came."

"Oh, but, Mr. Newman, that is impossible. The White Flower may die before she gets there. Tell her she must ride."

"I think she has some reason that we do not under-

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

stand, Miss Mendenhall. I think we shall have to let her have her own way," said the trader; and Katharine was forced into acceptance of the Indian woman's obstinate determination to walk back over the long, dusty way. But she was far from satisfied. No sooner had the travel-stained figure trudged out of sight than she began devising ways and means of herself going to the help of the pretty Indian girl, whose sands of life she feared were fast running out. If there were some one upon whom she might call! If only her father or Hugh Hunt would come back! If only Locke Raynor could be spared! He was but a hireling clerk and unversed in the Sioux tongue, but he was a man, every inch of him. The journey here had proved that beyond a doubt, and with him to prop up her scraps of courage, she surely could make White Flower's relatives understand what she wanted to do for White Flower. But he could not be spared, so there was no use broaching the subject to him. There was no way.

Late in the afternoon, Smoke Woman tramped wearily and doggedly into the tipi. No one paid any attention to her at all except the grandmother, who greeted her with an angry scowl. The tent was crowded with the girl's relatives and friends. The din was horrible. Yellow Owl was putting forth all his effort to overcome the offended spirits, counting much on the impression he was giving of exceptional *wakan* power and zeal, so that if the wheel of life and death did turn against him, in the eyes of his credulous tribesmen, not his the blame, but those superior deities who willed it thus.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

“Wa-hcá-ska! Wa-hcá-ska!” moaned Smoke Woman.

She fell on her knees and remained thus for a long time, her sharp, beady eyes, quickened by despair and mother-love, watching cunningly for her chance.

At sundown, when Katharine Mendenhall dismounted and entered, unbidden, she had found the way; but the way did not end here at the home of Black Tomahawk. If she had been wiser or more experienced, she would have, perhaps, realized that it was yet over early for a white woman to go alone into the heart of a Sioux village — even if it was a village of friendly Yanktonais. But her impulsive heart was aching for the White Flower, withering away, perhaps, because of her heartless selfishness; so, though she quaked in real fear, her courage and remorse carried her through, and she had come alone, leaving word at the Agency for some one to come for her when her father or Hugh Hunt came home. The sight of Smoke Woman kneeling beside the lowly couch gave her comfort, and she crossed quickly to her. The Indians gave no visible sign of the astounding phenomenon of her appearance among them; but the harsh discord of the conjurer's manipulations ceased, suddenly, and an ominous silence settled down upon the sick chamber.

It was at that moment that the famous necromancer, who hated the white man and the white man's creed with all the vindictiveness of a savage heart that heard the knell of his iniquitous profession in the cooling drip of the white man's

‘ ‘ T H E L I T T L E O X ’ ’

medicine, and in the sweet voice of the White Robe when he promised a brotherhood of red and white, saw through the ruse of the desperate mother, and perhaps understood, as well, why once more Wa-hcá-ska slumbered peacefully and naturally. His eyes glittered like a snake's. He straightened himself, folded his dark, shining arms across his naked chest, and nursed a haughty silence.

Soon Black Tomahawk spoke. There was much dignity in his simple words and broken English.

“Wa-hcá-ska will live. Me, I am grateful. *Wakantanka* hear our prayers. Yellow Owl great *Wapiya*. Son of Little Thunder he grateful, too. He dance the great Sun Dance two, three sleeps now. Injun god good. Injun god powerful. Black Tomahawk, me, I go across the big river see son of Little Thunder give thanks for Wa-hcá-ska. Sun-in-the-hair much kind. Me, I am grateful. She far from home. Me, I have much proud that she here. She lodge with Black Tomahawk this sleep. Smoke Woman and all the women relatives of Black Tomahawk will make a feast. She Tahu Tanka's daughter. Me, I shake hands with Tahu Tanka. I make a feast for Sun-in-the-hair.”

When Locke Raynor, sent by the distracted mother who had discovered Katharine's absence and errand before the Agent's return, arrived with his horse in a lather, he found Katharine in a fever to be off. Intuition told her to smother her impatience long enough to eat of the quick feast prepared for her by Black Tomahawk's women, but no persuasion could prevail upon

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

her to spend the night. Locke Raynor's coming for her by order of some one at the Agency, presumably Tahu Tanka, absolved her from yielding to the chief's hospitable request.

"Is your horse winded?" she asked, as Locke assisted her into the saddle.

"He came at the limit but he can return in like manner. Why?" responded Locke, trying to decide whether to scold her for an unreasonable child, thus to jeopardize her life so insanely, or to think of her as the bravest woman he knew — and he knew many — as he had already thought of her as the most beautiful, since the night she came to him by the dying camp-fire.

"Then let us return at — the limit," she said peremptorily.

"Why?" he asked again.

"Because I must see Hugh Hunt to-night."

"Won't to-morrow morning do as well?"

"No. He starts for the Upper Camp at six o'clock and I must see him before he goes."

Yes, Katharine Mendenhall was the most beautiful and the bravest woman he knew; but a shadow clouded his eyes, though there was no one to see it; for Katharine was already racing home, and there was nothing for him to do but to follow her through the quiet dark.

CHAPTER VII

THE SUN DANCE

RUNNING BIRD and his band of young bucks had returned after the twelve sleeps, punctual to the promise given Hugh Hunt. They were now on the point of leaving for their own Reservation on the other side of the river. Just what the warlike demonstration augured was not easy to determine. They were wanderers all—the Teton Sioux. Perhaps it meant only the *wanderlust* in their blood, called forth by the magic touch of Summer on the high prairies. It was a little odd that their roving should have carried them over into the territory of the peaceful Yanktons. They liked best to visit with the wilder tribes bordering their own domain, and with whom they were in constant communication. No wonder was expressed at Running Bird's visits to the Yanktonais. The friendship that had existed between Little Thunder and Black Tomahawk was well known at the Agency. The mantle of Little Thunder's friendship for Black Tomahawk had fallen upon his son and the bond between the young man and the old chief was very close indeed. Thus Running Bird's visits to the Yanktonais were never

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

questioned. It seemed incredible that the mere fact of Custer's being in the Black Hills should excite so thoughtful and reasonable a man as Running Bird had always shown himself to be. The military authorities laughed at the idea and let him alone. Major Mendenhall spent some sleepless hours over the vexing problem, and decided, also, to let him alone.

Hugh Hunt lay awake all the rest of the night after Katharine had sought him out, and he was up and dressed at daylight. He had not the power to let Running Bird alone. He had learned to admire the young Indian for many a wise word and daring deed; he had learned to honor him on that night of storm, when a dusky heathen gave up his shelter to a white Christian woman; but he had learned to love him on a journey long ago, when side by side the red and white lay down to sleep beneath a brooding, spangled sky, or rode together under a blazing sun through many a silent hour on a secret mission unauthorized of man. Red Cloud had kept faith. That crisis was safely passed. But another was coming, and while the military laughed, he must be girding himself for the battle. Running Bird must keep faith, too. And how? Not coercion, nor fear, nor scorn, nor double-dealing would avail with the son of Little Thunder, no more than it had availed with the just Oglala, Red Cloud. Nay, more — with the blood of the murdered chief yet unavenged, with apparently groundless but nevertheless strong suspicions of contemplated treachery on the part of the Government, nothing could avail with Running

THE SUN DANCE

Bird now but the light of a diviner faith than any told in tradition or sacrificed to in savage ceremony.

They had talked little of religion during those long, bright, Indian Summer days and cool, silent nights of that journey to Fort Laramie five years ago. Something in the Indian's imperturbable and polite tolerance seemed a constant suggestion to Hugh Hunt that it was not yet the time. Besides, the days and nights had been a succession of such still and beautiful ones, so removed, so altogether free from warring man or beast or element, such bright pearls of perfect peace, that there seemed to be no need in all the world for a fighting faith. Here was creed exemplified — the creed of sun and stars, of day and night, of river and mountain; the eagle circling above its nest; the peaks softened by the blue of Indian Summer; the timid deer peeking through evergreen glade, the huge timber wolf turning to gaze with a mild curiosity after the travellers — all at peace. It was on days like those that this red man and this white man learned to love each other with the peculiar love of David and Jonathan.

They had not even thought much about religion. The days, though long, had been so full of other things, and of a great content. They had felt so little need of a religion apart from the glorious atmosphere and the companioned way. But now, riding over to Running Bird's camp in the early morning, Hugh Hunt asked himself, searchingly, had his great opportunity come and gone, and had he been too indolent, too indifferent, to grasp it as it passed by?

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"My brother is early," was Running Bird's greeting, coming out of his tipi. "I shake hands with my brother with my heart."

"Is it true that you cross the river to-day?" asked Hugh, returning the greeting, heartily.

"The Slender Ash looks weary," said Running Bird, evasively, "he works all the time."

"To tell you the truth," said Hugh, with a sudden frank smile, "it was you who kept me awake, Running Bird. It is sleep I need and you take it from me."

"It pleases the Slender Ash to jest," said Running Bird, simply.

Others were coming out of the tents, preparatory to the fitting. In the absence of women in the camp, two or three of the bucks were lazily getting the breakfast. Mad Wolf lounged out, sleepily, grunted a short greeting, and threw himself down upon the sod behind Running Bird and Hugh Hunt. Presently, Running Bird moved away, unconcernedly, and Hugh followed.

"The Slender Ash has something on his mind," said Running Bird, when they had left the camp behind them.

"Why do you leave us to-day?" asked Hugh. "It is lonesome without my brother."

"If the Slender Ash will come to the point, I will answer him with much gladness," said Running Bird, patiently.

"Who began this evasion, Running Bird?" said Hugh, a touch of reproof in his voice. "The news was brought to me that you intended to break camp to-day and return to your home. I ask you, 'Is it

THE SUN DANCE

true?' And you say to me, 'The Slender Ash looks weary.' Was that kind? Running Bird is the son of a chief. He is a great leader. He goes where he pleases. But he is my brother and I miss him when he goes away — and he says to me, 'The Slender Ash looks weary.'"

The reproof hurt, but Running Bird gave no sign of it. His glance wandered back to where Mad Wolf still lounged on the green turf.

"'The news was brought,'" he repeated, thoughtfully.

"You are mistaken, Running Bird," interrupted Hugh, quickly. "It was not Mad Wolf who told me."

"Who then?"

"Well, I heard it — I come to you — and it is true. You were going away without saying good-bye."

Still Running Bird did not relent.

"It would hurt my little white brother for me to tell him that I go to dance to the great sun. Therefore I do not tell him. I say good-bye in my heart. But he knows. Some one tells him — and he is sorry. I said he would be sorry."

"And you would really go without saying good-bye?" said Hugh, a mournfulness in his tone that would not be denied. He was thinking of the long, bright days and nights of their companionship.

Running Bird nodded. He was very grave.

"But you won't go now — now that I know and am here to ask you not? You believe me, do you not, when

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

I tell you that your medicine men talk lies when they institute these devil dances in the name of some imaginary deity? ”

“ My brother is not polite,” said Running Bird, dispassionately. “ He will not listen to our stories of how the Dakotas came to people the earth and of the spirits that watch over us. He says, ‘ Lies.’ Yet he wants us to listen to his stories and to believe them. That seems strange to us. But we are more polite than my brother. We do listen and we believe them, too.”

How to argue a faith like that! A faith that was courteous enough to believe any tale of any race — no matter how mythological its character, or how dizzily impossible its imaginative conception.

“ Running Bird,” he said, slowly, “ there is only one God. You must see that, don’t you? And God is God of all people — black and white and red. That must be so or how can we live and grow and be strong and at peace? Don’t you see that if every people had a different God and some people even had many, that the very gods would be constantly fighting each other — and that ever the battle would be to the strong? ”

“ My brother speaks truth,” said Running Bird, nodding gravely. “ The battle is ever to the strong. The white man is very strong. He is as many as the leaves of many trees.”

“ But, Running Bird, we poor, puny men fight because we do not understand. Can’t you imagine a God who is great enough and good enough and wise enough to govern the world without fighting? Running Bird,” involun-

T H E S U N D A N C E

tarily his voice lowered with intense feeling, "our Elder Brother died on the cross without fighting. Do you think He was a coward because He would not fight? They drove nails through His hands and His feet and His side, but He did not cry out. He said, 'Father, forgive them.'"

For the first time, the Indian's proud head dropped a little. His eyes unconsciously wavered. Of all the stories of the white man's religion, this one alone of the Man on the Cross had the power to move him and to make him strangely restless.

"Can a man be better and stronger and wiser than God, Running Bird? You say you believe me when I tell you about the Christ on the Cross. You believe there was such a man. He was the Son of God. He did not fight. He did not kill. He did not seek revenge for injuries. If He had, it would have been very easy for Him to raise an army and go upon the warpath and destroy all His enemies, or strike them numb with some plague of sickness. Don't you see that you make your gods just like men — fighting and quarreling and sinning? To-day, one god is the strongest. To-morrow, another. My friend, God is the strongest yesterday, to-day, and forever."

Running Bird was goaded to retaliate.

"If He is so strong, why then did He not kill those men who drove the nails? Maybe there were other gods — superior. Maybe He could not resist the *tonwans* of these others. Onkteri and Wakinyan are enemies, always — as the Dakotas and the Ojibwas always were, back at

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

the head waters of the Mississippi. Onkteri created the earth — the mother Onkteri, the earth, and the father Onkteri, the water that is all around. They are very big and powerful. But Wakinyan is also powerful. He is a very great war god. He speaks in the thunder. Yet, Onkteri and Wakinyan fall beneath each other's *tonwans*. They cannot resist them. A god who cannot fight is a very big coward."

"Running Bird, do your *jossakeeds* ever tell you what becomes of your Onkteri and Wakinyan when they are slain by each other's *tonwans*?"

A peculiar look of almost wonder came into the Indian's eyes; then he answered with dignity:

"They keep away from each other so they will not meet."

"Then they are cowards — like men. If they should happen on each other and put each other to death, what would become of your world, Running Bird, the Indian world which worships weaklings?"

"There are other gods," said Running Bird, evasively.

"And you believe in them?"

"Perhaps."

"Who are Yellow Owl's particular gods?" asked Hugh, eagerly, a surge of joy rising in his heart at the fighting chance he read in that brief answer.

"Ask him," said Running Bird, relapsing once more into his racial reticence in regard to religion.

Hugh Hunt believed the time had come for him to play his trump card. His face was pale and composed, but his eyes were burning with that strange lustre that

THE SUN DANCE

seemed ever to threaten to consume his body. In his heart, he believed that he was at last playing a winning game. The odds had been fearful. Sometime he would remember how the fight had sapped his vitality. He would be very tired to-morrow.

"Running Bird, it was not Yellow Owl who made Wa-hcá-ska well. She sickened again after you left and Katharine Mendenhall, whom you all call Sun-in-the-hair, came and gave her medicine and cared for her, and she is almost well now. It was white man's medicine and white man's care that healed her, my brother. Yellow Owl would have killed her with his wicked incantations and pretensions to *wakan* power. She would have been dead now but for Sun-in-the-hair."

"I shake hands with Sun-in-the-hair with my heart," said Running Bird, simply.

The young Missionary came close to Running Bird and put his arm around his shoulders in the old affectionate way. His eyes were alight.

"And you will stay with us yet a few more days?"

"I go now," said Running Bird, calmly; and suddenly Hugh Hunt's face was the face of an old man.

"Why, Running Bird?" he asked.

"To dance to the sun," said Running Bird, phlegmatically.

"Why, Running Bird?" asked Hugh, again.

"I make my vow. I dance."

"You made it when you thought Yellow Owl had healed Wa-hcá-ska. He did not. You are absolved from your vow."

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Black Tomahawk heard my vow. Yellow Owl heard it. Many young men of the Yanktonais heard it — and Black Tomahawk's women. My young men know why I return. I am not a coward. Little Thunder had the scars of it on his breast when he died. His son will have the scars, too, when he comes to die."

"It is such a useless sacrifice, Running Bird!"

"Your Man on the Cross did not have to do that — but he did not cry out. Running Bird will not cry out. You shall see."

"None know better than I that you will not cry out," said Hugh, sadly. "It is not that. Oh, Running Bird, can't you see?"

"Good-bye, my brother."

Had that journey westward through long, lazy days and dreamy nights been his opportunity and he had missed it? Had that been the time for him to show Running Bird that the warm sun, the light winds, the fair, wild landscape, yellow and gold and blue under the kindly but sadly prescient touch of October, the far away stars, were not God but God's handiwork? There had been nothing to distract then. Had he done well to be so idly content with just fellowship? Perhaps, if he had spoken then, Running Bird would not now be preparing to dance his heathen *jubilate* to a staring sun. Thus Hugh Hunt communed with himself, walking home with bent head and the face of an old man.

Later, as he was packing a small travelling kit in accordance with a sudden determination that had seized him, he was surprised when the door of the mission house

T H E S U N D A N C E

was opened and Mad Wolf slouched into the room. He was a handsome fellow, Mad Wolf, in a dark, moody way, and when moved, he had the gift of speech to a strange and unusual degree. Now, however, he waited for the Missionary to make the first essay, ignoring the invitation to be seated. A great hope had sprung up in the Missionary's heart.

"Is Running Bird not then gone?" he asked, eagerly, in Dakota.

"Running Bird is gone," said the Indian, laconically.

"Why are you here then? I supposed, of course, all of his young men were going back with him."

"I stayed, but —" said Mad Wolf, and paused as if he had expressed himself lucidly, and Hugh Hunt, who in his more than five years' sojourn in the Sioux country had not only learned to understand and to speak the formal language, but had made acquaintance with its idioms as well, understood.

"You stayed but you would have gone had it not been for some strong reason that kept you. Well, what is that reason?"

"The forerunner of the White Robe is a man of much wisdom and power," began Mad Wolf, suavely. "When he speaks, all men listen — white and Dakota. He should be called Silver Tongue. It is a great gift. It makes us hear the voices of new gods. It makes us know that he who has this great gift is wisest of us all. It makes his power very great. It makes us poor Indians do his bidding. It moves —"

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Yes, I know, Mad Wolf," interrupted Hugh, quietly, "but tell me what you want. I am in a very great hurry. The boat will be crossing, presently, and I must be on it when it goes."

"So?"

The Indian's eyes narrowed — the only visible sign that his pride felt the sting of this affront to his oratory. He had scarcely begun what he had intended to say. He could not finish it well under half an hour. His heart swelled with a new bitterness toward the white man with his insolent haste.

"I have come," he made answer, forcing himself to a disagreeable task of coming to the point at once, "to ask the Silver Tongue to go to Chief Black Tomahawk and say to him that Mad Wolf, of Running Bird's band, desires his daughter, Wa-hcá-ska, for his wife."

"But, Mad Wolf!" cried Hugh, surprised. "Wa-hcá-ska is not of your tribe."

"We often marry out of our tribe," said Mad Wolf, composedly.

"Have you spoken to her?"

"Black Tomahawk is a great chief. It is better that the Silver Tongue speak for me."

"I do not think I am the right 'go between,' Mad Wolf," said the Missionary, perplexed. "I do not think Black Tomahawk likes me on account of my — faith."

"You have the gift of the silver tongue. Black Tomahawk will listen. He knows the Silver Tongue is a very wise man. His sons are dead. He will be glad for Wa-hcá-ska to be guided by the wise white man. I

THE SUN DANCE

have ponies and very fine skins. I do not forget that Black Tomahawk is a very great chief of the Dakotas."

"I saw you drunk the other day," began Hugh deliberately. He half expected a blow and waited for it calmly; but Mad Wolf was not sensitive on this point. He even smiled.

"There is no more fire-water on the Reservation. Anyway I will not drink any more when you go to Black Tomahawk and speak for me."

The temptation was very great. With all his heart, Hugh Hunt wished that he might say:

"I will go, Mad Wolf, and do the best I can for you when I come back from across the river. I believe you are a good Indian. How could my brother, Running Bird, have any but good Indians for his friends? I have your promise not to drink any more fire-water. Shake hands with me for that."

But he could not. Running Bird had never told him that he loved Wa-hcá-ska and wanted her for his wife. He had only guessed it. Running Bird could not hold him accountable. Wa-hcá-ska had an Indian heart. If Running Bird married her, there would be no more hope for his regeneration—and he loved Running Bird. He believed Running Bird's sacrificial dance of gratitude had been prompted by the young Dakota's love for Wa-hcá-ska. Some day soon would Running Bird come to him and ask him to speak with Black Tomahawk? But would he not be justified for Running Bird's soul's sake—Running Bird who had been his companion for those many days and nights? Ah,

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

no! It was because of those companioned days and nights that he could not say what tempted him sorely. He had failed on that journey — doubtless he was failing again — but Running Bird was his friend. There was no other way.

“You must forgive me, Mad Wolf,” he said, gently. “I cannot be your emissary to Black Tomahawk. Good-bye.”

He turned abruptly and was gone, leaving the Indian gazing after him with such concentrated hate in his piercing eyes that it seemed as if Hugh Hunt must be conscious of it as he strode rapidly down to the landing.

The sun rose hot and glaring on the morning of the day appointed for the beginning of the fast of the sun dance. It was greeted by a long row of dark faces, turned resolutely toward the spot of its heralded approach. There was not a glimpse of shade on the plain where the barbarous endurance trial was to drag painfully on through that day and the next, and possibly even longer than that, if a sufficient number of fanatics were forthcoming to make its continuance worth while. It was a breathless morning, too, though haze on the horizon gave hint of the hot south wind that was even then on the way to sear the grass and to aid the sun in his fight to break down the pride and the boasts of the devotees.

The near tribes had been gathering for several days. Black Tomahawk, a Chief of the Yanktonais, with his fierce, white-headed, aged mother — a hopeless exponent

T H E S U N D A N C E

of the old days — was there. Yellow Owl, the famous medicine man, was there. Many chiefs and braves of more distant bands still were also there with their women — always the bitterest toward white innovation; while every man on the home reserve who was physically able had brought his family and pitched his tipi in the circle surrounding the spot chosen for the dance. Major Mendenhall was there — big, smiling, tolerant, devoting much of his time to mopping the perspiration from his face. With him was Katharine, interested in spite of herself, a wide straw hat protecting her eyes from the glare of the sun. With the Major and his daughter was the new issue clerk. To this small group of whites, standing near the dancers, came Hugh Hunt — the gold cross on his waistcoat, sun-struck, gleaming with a peculiar radiance. With the Missionary was a stranger.

“Of all people!” exclaimed Locke Raynor, with a light laugh. “How do you reconcile your conscience?”

“Time enough to do penance when this is all over,” said Hugh, also lightly. “I bring you a guest, Major, from Washington.”

“Why, then, he must be Inspector Warlick. How do you do, Mr. Inspector? We have been looking for you for the last two or three weeks.” He held out his hand, cordially.

“I was detained,” said the Inspector, noncommittally. He extended a cool, well-kept hand, without enthusiasm, in response to the Major’s hearty greeting.

“Katharine, let me present Mr. Warlick, who doubt-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

less hankers to take our scalps, officially. My daughter, Mr. Warlick, and Mr. Raynor, our new issue clerk — like you, from Washington. How on earth did you two laggards get across the river?"

"I was too late for the boat yesterday when it crossed Running Bird and his band, and again this morning when you came across. That was an unearthly hour for a civilized man to get out of bed, Major. How did you manage it? So I had abandoned my determination to participate in this — orgie," explained Hugh, "when the *Peninah* steamed into port with Mr. Warlick aboard, and we persuaded it to land us on this side with one of the dories. Our horses swam — and here we are."

To Katharine, the Inspector was exceedingly polite. To Locke Raynor, he merely inclined a stately gray head, with the words — "Mr. Raynor has time, then, for such tomfoolery as this?"

"I take it," was Locke's cheerful response.

"Indeed!" said Warlick, softly.

"I left the Chief Clerk doing everything as well —" began Hugh.

"As I could do — or better," completed the Major, with his jolly laugh. "I don't doubt it in the least, so I will stay for a little while, anyway. I really have a great curiosity to see that young spitfire win his scars."

The dancing had begun in earnest. The faces of the religious enthusiasts were turned ever directly toward the sun, following it on its slow, burning course to the zenith. The majority of the participants, including all the women, merely executed the peculiar and monotonous

T H E S U N D A N C E

steps of the dance ceaselessly, with little outward sign of weariness, gazing ever at the sun, the weird tom-tom beating its monotonous accompaniment. But here and there were extremists who — yearning for the admiration and commendation of their tribe and kindred, greedy for the glory of the scars which should be a never-lapsing proof of their bravery and endurance, and constant food for their vanity, forever setting them apart as very famous men among their people — had chosen the supreme test. Most of these were young men. Among them was the high caste son of Chief Little Thunder. His face was composed with a lofty pride. His dark eyes, however dulled by their direct gaze at the terrible sun, never wavered from the task set them by the indomitable will of the man. Those who knew him best — most of all, Hugh Hunt — saw the awful gauntness of his beardless cheeks, brought about by the fasting before and the pain of the dance — and it was not yet noon. He was the proudest man, perhaps, among all the Sioux nations. Must he fail?

Through two raw holes in the sensitive flesh of his chest was threaded a thong of deerskin. The ends of this ribbon of seasoned hide were firmly attached to a pole, so that by throwing himself back, the strain of his weight would come on that slight measure of quivering flesh on his breast. So conscientiously did Running Bird lean away from the pole that the wonder was the thong did not tear its way through at once; but the hot morning dragged wearily away, and it held. The south wind, burning and enervating, seared the grass

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

and blistered the earth. There was not the faintest suggestion of cloud or the coming of cloud. Without let or hindrance, out of the far away blue, the sun beat down hotter and hotter, as if in very truth to wither these pygmy defiers of its majesty.

"I think I shall have to get out of this or have apoplexy," said the Major.

"Please, father, not just yet," pleaded Katharine. "It is awful — but splendid, too. I want to see Running Bird win. Let us stay a little longer."

Was this the same girl who had shrunk in terror at the mere thought of the Indian country? Hugh Hunt and Locke Raynor looked at her, curiously. There was hero worship in her frank blue eyes. She it was who had warned the young Missionary of the Indian's intention to join this brutal dance. Yet now she stayed to see this same Running Bird win a savage victory and be rewarded with those honors so peculiarly yearned after by his elemental race — scars to tickle the vanity while life lasted, and to make one remembered when one was gone. Locke Raynor, not later from the East than she, smiled in puzzled wonderment. But Hugh Hunt, also from the East but of an earlier day, from a well-born, well-bred, well-financed East, whose high caste showed in his small, shapely hands and feet; in a certain altogether unconscious courtliness of manner; in his pure, unstudied speech and lofty scholarship, and in the absolute grace with which he had left all these things behind — this same Hugh Hunt seemed all at once to understand. For his own blood began to pound through

T H E S U N D A N C E

his veins in lust of victory for his sworn red brother. From the depths of his heart to the heights of his soul, he longed for Running Bird to stand the test. Why? He stood appalled in the presence of his own revealed soul. It was true that Running Bird was living up to the best light that he saw — and what a man he was, to live it so grandly! — but did that give him, a priest of the Supreme Light, warrant to stand by and clap on the heathen? He put his hand before his eyes as if to brush away the horror of his fierce desire. But what a man if — ah, *when* he should come to shake himself free of centuries of ignorance, superstition, sorcery!

The terrible sun climbed higher and higher — staring, implacable. The hot wind blew hotter and hotter. The whites were seated under an awning near the tipi of Black Tomahawk, who had donned his robes of rank for this occasion, and whose thoughtful, kindly, seamed, retrospective countenance, with its shadow of gentle melancholy, was lighted up with approbation. It was a wonderfully attractive face. Katharine, watching it musingly and thinking of the pathetic impossibility of a white man's future for such as he, saw it suddenly change and sadden. Had Running Bird lost? No, it was a wild, tribally ambitious, racially resentful and savage young buck of Spotted Tail's camp, who had fainted just as the sun made goal on the meridian. His friends carried him away. Perhaps the incident reminded Black Tomahawk of his own untamable sons who were gone. Others dropped out. Some, not bound with thongs, as if they had been ashamed to

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

show weakness before any one of the extremists, had faltered; others, because they had reached the real limit of their endurance. But the great majority wheeled and turned blinded, ghastly faces to the sun as it began the long, slow, tortuous journey down the western slope of the shimmering, shining sky.

"Father!" It was a low, shocked, intense exclamation. Running Bird seemed to be leaning back with all his might. The skin stretched like rubber but the thongs would not pull through. Blood trickled from the gaping wounds. Katharine, unable to bear the awful sight any longer, buried her face in her hands.

"There, now, child, don't make a scene. For Heaven's sake, don't faint out here on this God-forsaken prairie, with its nightmare of no water. You would come. Try not to forget that neither your mother nor I favors these idiotic gallivantings around the Reservation. It's no place for a woman. Come, we will go back to the grub box and water jug. Mr. Warlick, Mr. Hunt, and of course Mr. Raynor, you are ordered to come to luncheon with us at once."

"No place for a woman — and yet it was you who brought poor little mother and me here," said Katharine, with a faint smile. Her lips were still pale, but she stood erect and without support. "I do not see how you can let such things as this be, father."

"I thank you, Major, and accept your most generous invitation gladly," interrupted the inspector, brushing wisps of seared grass from his clothes. "I trust that by doing so I do not deprive any one of his full share

THE SUN DANCE

of camp rations. Two unexpected additions to your luncheon party —”

“Not at all,” assured the Major.

“You will excuse me, Major, I shall not eat now,” said Hugh Hunt.

“It is enough to sicken any one — yon brutal and ghastly exposure. I wonder you allow it, Major,” said Warlick.

“I am not the Government,” said Major Mendenhall, briefly.

“You will doubtless feel better after you have left this crude spectacle, my dear Mr. Hunt,” said the inspector, blandly, whose dignified and portly inner man, now so hot and uncomfortable, yearned after the grub box and the water jug with a mighty yearning. “You had much better come with us.”

“Why, Mr. Hunt?” asked Locke, in a low voice. “All that out there is such infernal nonsense — such a stupendous mockery — such an all around blunder.”

“Running Bird has not eaten for two days. He is wrong, but I will watch with him,” said Hugh Hunt, simply.

“And so will I,” said Katharine, unexpectedly.

“Indeed you won’t. You will come with me, and at once,” ordered the Major, decidedly.

“Doubtless Major Mendenhall’s clerk will bear you company while we are absent,” suggested Warlick, suavely.

“Doubtless,” responded Locke, cheerfully seating himself upon the grass again.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Don't be an idiot, Raynor," said Hugh, falling easily into Western slang on occasion. "Go and get your dinner."

The Major, the Inspector, and Katharine were already strolling toward the wagon.

"I don't lay claim to fasting for love of that Pharisee of a red monstrosity out there," said Locke, whimsically. "I shall certainly a little later eat the crumbs from Mr. Inspector's table. For the present, I fast."

"What have you ever done to Mr. Warlick or he to you?"

"Nothing," drawled Locke. "But what a pity it would be if — just accidentally, you understand — I should happen to slop water on his shining shoes or drop the buttered side of a hardtack on his immaculate locks. Look to your man, Hunt! I believe from my soul he is fainting."

But he was n't. His strong, proud face was gray with suffering, but he had not cried out. He half turned so that he caught his white brother's eyes full upon him. In his own there was no triumph over the end now so nearly achieved — neither was there a weakening of the will. He had boasted that he would not cry out — and he had not. But through all the pain of his effort — it was very long that his flesh held out, oh, very long — and through all the satisfaction derived from the admiring comments, he could not help hearing from his friends. Through all the long, cruel, staring day, he saw Black Tomahawk's fine melancholy face, proud of him, proud of his strength and of his

THE SUNDANCE

endurance, wishful for the glory of the past, but shadowed with prescience of the passing of the old order; he saw Yellow Owl's gloating, triumphant countenance, evil with the hate of the new order, confident of a return of the old supremacy, clinging to the dream to the bitter end and willing to restore it by any treachery — if he could; he saw Mad Wolf's handsome, passionate face, in which had lately come a certain craftiness of expression, and whom, unexplainably, he had come to distrust; and then there was his white brother, Hugh Hunt, with his pale refined face, his shining eyes, his wonderful gift of comradeship — in whom he read no intolerant condemnation of this act, no heartless mockery of it and him, only a man's admiration for another man's strength of body and will, and infinite sadness because of the uselessness of it all. Because of these faces, there was no foreshadowed triumph in Running Bird's eyes — only melancholy.

Another man staggered. Ah, but the deer hide had finally torn its way through and freed him and crowned him with glory evermore. His haggard face was agleam with gratified vanity and — something else. There was the intoxication of the zealot there, too, and a very triumph of defiance toward the slender young fellow in black, who stood there alone in a world of savages, and yet who represented everything that the savage did not want. The victor left the field a marked man forevermore.

Would Running Bird's vigil never end? He was too strong to faint, too proud to give up — and the sun was

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

very low. If it sank before the thong ripped its way through his flesh, he would be up with the awful sun again to-morrow. Camp-fires were being builded before many tipis. Somewhere a dog barked — then another — and another, until it seemed as if every dog in the whole encampment had joined in a mournful howl to speed the setting sun. The dreadful monotony of the tom-tom had not ceased all day. As the sun reached the far-away horizon, still palpitating with the heat, the chants of the dancers swelled louder and louder, until the clamor of tom-tom and dog and fanatic was deafening. When at last the sun sank away from sight, Running Bird's release came. It seemed as if he had timed it so. Perhaps he had. He was a man of wonderful will power. The dancers glided away in their soundless moccasins, and soon it was as if the barbaric rite had never been. Hugh Hunt and Running Bird were alone under the awning.

"You did not cry out, my brother," said the Missionary, gently.

"No," said Running Bird, listlessly. "I did not cry out."

CHAPTER VIII

WHY NOT?

“PLEASE, father,” said Katharine, coaxingly, like a child.

“You might just as well stop teasing now,” said the Major, decidedly. “You cannot go, and that settles it once and for all.” He tightened a tug, in curt dismissal of Katharine’s importunities.

“But why?” persisted Katharine, who knew her father rather well. “You will be there. I shall certainly be safer with my own father than flying around a hostile Indian country alone. What could possibly happen to me to-morrow, I should like to know?”

“Why is it so necessary for you to go gallivanting around at all?” asked the long-suffering Major, petulantly, goaded into argument in spite of his recent ultimatum. “Why can’t you stay at home once in a while and keep your mother company, like an ordinary girl? Don’t you imagine she ever gets lonesome — and deucedly lonesome, at that?”

“What a pity you did n’t think of that before you sent that peremptory summons,” began Katharine, demurely, but she hastened to add, contritely, “don’t pay any attention to my nonsense, father. I am beginning

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

to be glad that we came — almost. I shall be altogether glad if you will only let me go. I love to ride, and there is nothing else to do. Please!”

“It’s a long thirty miles, child, long and lonesome. You’ll get mighty tired of your own company, I’m thinking.”

“Why, I sha’n’t be alone. Aren’t Locke Raynor and Rufe Moses going to drive the cattle?”

The Major buckled the reins together and threw them into the buggy.

“That’s it. I don’t like to think of you — the only chick or child I’ve got — riding hours and hours across a strange and even dangerous country, with only a couple of common hands for company — and them strangers. Try to remember that the very first time you repeat that insane performance of visiting an Indian camp alone, back you go to the States — and without your mother, too.”

“Mr. Raynor does n’t seem so tremendously common,” said Katharine, smiling, “but if you don’t want me to go with them, why can’t I just jump in the buggy right now and go with you?”

“Because I have to stop at fifty — more or less — outlandish places on the way, as you know. That is why I am starting ahead of the herd. Otherwise, I should take both you and your mother. Run along and tell her that I’m off and to hurry along the grub box.”

“And I may go to-morrow?”

“Not if there were any power under the sun to keep

W H Y N O T ?

you from doing as you please. There is not — or, if there is, I have failed to find it — so you will go of course. If I had dreamed of the tremendous reserve force of tomboy you had stored away in your system, and the amazing rapidity with which it would develop under new skies, I certainly should have considered much more deliberately than I did before sending that telegram.”

“It is n’t all tomboy, father,” said Katharine, earnestly. “I can help the boys drive, and besides —”

“Well, besides what?” asked the Major, resignedly.

“Nothing,” said Katharine, absently. She was thinking about the Missionary’s great gift of comradeship and wondering if it could ever be worth while. If it should be worth while for him, because of the touch of divinity in his nature, could she, Katharine Mendenhall, ever be to the women — Wa-hcá-ska for instance — what he was to all, and especially to Running Bird? He had said, “Make them like you.” Ah, she was far too frivolous and selfish. But sometimes opportunities came during those long rides over the Reservation. “It is not all tomboy, father,” she repeated, a little wistfully.

“Well, I said you could go, did n’t I?” said the Major, smiling at his absurd display of weakness in discipline. “Only don’t try any fancy stunts in riding, don’t bother the boys, and stick close to me when the fun begins to-morrow.”

The drive began early in the morning. Katharine rode down to the ferry, happily. All her child’s love

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

of riding had come back to her, enhanced by the memory of the long years of neglect and indifference to it that lay between that time and this. She was surprised to find how little she had forgotten of the ways of a horse and saddle since she had galloped bare-headed and bare-legged through rail-fenced lanes lined with black-berry brambles, or through primeval forests, dim and mysterious with their palpitating suggestions of woods life. The years between — the years spent in learning the lore of books and the ways of convention — began to seem to Katharine Mendenhall, in retrospect, as exceedingly barren and unprofitable years — and deadly uninteresting. It was to-day that linked her back to those free, intensely livable days of the rail fence and the skulking wild cat. More than ten years had passed by since she had climbed into a saddle, and yet that time — bare legs, freckles and all — seemed much, much nearer to her, riding down to the ferry in the cool of the early morning, than any of those years that lay between. She almost resented having meanwhile grown up so that she could not kick off her shoes and stockings as of old, or shie her slatted sunbonnet at a bluejay. So strong was the power of this association of ideas that for a moment her slim pretty feet actually burned in their stout riding boots, and her hands fingered unconsciously the ribbons that made her wide rough hat secure against the time when the wind would surely rise. There being no saucy bluejay available, she laughed suddenly, and let the ribbons be.

W H Y N O T ?

It was issue day at the Lower Agency. Major Mendenhall, who was also in charge of that place, had left the Upper Agency the day before to be present when the Government doled out to those Indians their measure of rations. Inspector Warlick had gone down. Locke Raynor, issue clerk at the Upper Agency, was to superintend the beef drive, assisted by a herder, Rufe Moses, and accompanied by the Major's daughter. The cattle made the start calmly enough, with little or no show of their range proclivities to obstreperousness. Rufe Moses proved himself to be an old hand at a drive, keeping the small herd compactly together with little help from the inexperienced issue clerk, so that Locke presently found himself chatting away, comfortably, with the Major's bright-haired daughter, on terms of easy and unhurried intimacy, such as he had not enjoyed since the long overland journey from the stranded steamer.

"How you love a horse!" he said, watching the flush on her face and the sparkle in her eyes, brought there by the exertion of a recent mad but unnecessary chase to flank a wandering steer.

"Don't you?" she asked.

"Pretty well. I'd rather stroke an oar or make a touch-down than ride one, though."

"Are n't you rather slim for foot-ball?" she asked, arching her brows in laughing criticism.

"But every bit muscle," he assured her, with emphasis.

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

"And so you are a college man," she said, musingly. "I hardly expected to find one so far away from — well, where colleges are, you know."

"How do you know that I am a college man, Miss Mendenhall? When have I been so raw as to give myself away in that manner?"

"Why, foot-ball, you know," she answered, surprised.

"Oh, they play foot-ball outside of a college campus, Miss Mendenhall."

"And you talked about stroking an oar —"

"Well, you see," he seemed oddly embarrassed, "I used to camp occasionally up in the Adirondacks —"

"And learned to row up the mountains? How interesting!" exclaimed Katharine, innocently.

"Oh, there are streams and lakes," he said, laughing and coloring at her gentle sarcasm.

"Of course I shall change the subject at once," said Katharine. "I am sorry I have touched — however inadvertently — upon — hallowed ground. Only I can't understand why you wish to hide anything so palpably unhideable," she challenged.

"Because I am ashamed of it," he said, honestly and unexpectedly.

"Ashamed of it! I don't understand. Won't you please explain?"

He did not answer her at once, but rode on slowly, his eyes on the toe of his boot, while he idly thumped it with his riding whip.

"Why," said Katharine, softly, in surprise, "you are in earnest, I do believe! I thought you must be

W H Y N O T ?

joking. I'll wager my glove against your — cowboy kerchief, that I'll beat you to that hill over there. Rufe won't mind the temporary desertion."

"We might cause the herd to stampede. Some other time I'll accept your challenge, gladly. Yes, I am heartily ashamed of many things that I did during my college days — especially abroad."

He spoke with boyish frankness, eliminating altogether the affected drawl that he assumed on most occasions.

"You did n't kill anybody, did you?" asked Katharine, taking him so seriously that she would not have been greatly astonished just then to hear that in truth he was a homicide hiding from justice.

"No, I never killed anybody. But I have been a trifter, with no motive in life but to spend money and have what I thought was a good time."

Her face, with its tiny, piquant freckles, framed in the rough straw hat tied under the chin to form a poke, became vaguely aloof. Its friendliness froze to polite interest. Very far away, indeed, all at once, seemed the days of bare feet and slatted sunbonnets. Men like this belonged to the latter period of her life, and called for the same old convention and the same old surroundings. It really was n't respectable for her to be riding miles away from anywhere with a herd boy and a man who admitted that he was a frivolous pleasure-seeker, with no serious aim in life, for sole company. In her own gloriously healthy university life, she had systematically snubbed the triflers.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"One's father knows such a lot more than one does — if one only were not so frightfully conceited," she thought, wishing herself, with all her heart, back within the grimly stockaded walls of the Upper Agency. "And poor brave little mother. How lonesome she must be with a tomboy for a daughter!" Thus she turned the tide of her gentle sarcasm back upon herself. She would return if she were not too proud to run — just because a man whom she had rather admired for some seriousness of intent proved to be only a frivolous pleasure-seeker. So she merely lifted her chin a trifle higher and said, "Indeed!"

They rode on in silence for some time. At last Katharine spoke.

"Sometimes people stop leading that kind of a life and amount to something after all."

"Yes, they do, sometimes," he agreed, the shadow of a smile lurking about his mouth.

"When are you going to stop?" she demanded. But the faint smile had told her what the answer would be.

"I have already stopped," he said.

"When?"

"One week before I started for the Indian country. It took me that long to get my appointment."

"That is not very long, is it," she asked, "to be stopped? And was it necessary to begin so far down? It looks affected, and that never lasts."

"Don't you believe me?" he asked, gravely.

She intended to answer him quite frankly, "Not in

W H Y N O T ?

the least." She turned to say it and found that he was not looking at her at all but that his fine gray eyes, with a look in them that was like seeing visions, were lifted to the broken line of the southern hills. They had looked like that in that weird midnight hour when he sat alone by the dying fire and the wolves howled. All at once she believed him. She said instead:

"Yes, I believe you. Will you let me tell you how glad I am?"

"Indeed, and that's what I am longing to hear," he confessed, with a little laugh of relief.

"And I will go farther," she continued, in a burst of repentant generosity. "I will confess to you that a little ways back I got dreadfully uncomfortable thinking how — unrespectable it all was for the Major's daughter to be 'gallivanting around,' as the Major expresses it, with Rufe Moses and a man who had to drive cattle because he had trifled away his opportunities."

"But I did trifle away my birthright and I do have to issue cattle because of it," said Locke, still serious.

"But you have stopped trifling," said Katharine, smiling, "and everything is possible to a man who has stopped. Now you will mind your father foreverafter and be happy forevermore," she concluded, whimsically.

"I am afraid my father does n't know just where I am," said Locke, with an odd little laugh. "Therefore, I shall experience some difficulty in minding him."

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

"How terrible. Tell him where you are at once."

"But I am under oath not to tell him for a year."

"Did he exact that promise from you?"

"No. I am afraid that I — thrust it upon him."

"How perfectly childish! Why have you done such a foolish thing?"

"My father does not believe in me, Miss Mendenhall. He was right. I squandered his money and I — got into scrapes. Mighty uncomfortable ones, too, some of them. He told me that if I had to shift for myself, I could not live a month. I fell to wondering and I am here to see if he — knew."

"Mr. Raynor did not help you to this appointment, then?"

"Mr. Raynor? I — you mean —" he began confusedly.

"Why, your father, of course."

"Oh, my father — to be sure," he stammered, a faint flush darkening his tanned face. "No, my father did not help me. As I said before, I doubt if he knows any more than just that I am 'out West' somewhere."

"Think of meeting a man with a mystery and a history away out in the Indian country," said Katharine, a new touch of gravity resting upon her. "A man who cannot — or will not — be known by his father's name. I do not think you have done anything very bad, and I think it is fine for you to come here to try to help work out a future for the Indians. I am sorry that I said that about beginning low down. I did not mean it."

W H Y N O T ?

"Not so very fine, Miss Mendenhall. I am so much more optimistic about my own future than that of our wards. I am afraid I am here to work out my own salvation rather than that uncertain and topply one of Hunt's red pets, and incidentally to be ready to pick up some of the plums that the Commission occasionally are the innocent means of scattering for the delectation of the early bird."

"I am beginning to think," said Katharine, slowly, wistful eyes fixed unseeingly upon the compact drive, "that it is Mr. Hunt who has found the way. I am beginning to think that we — the Government — blunder when we go it alone. I think we shall do well to follow the way of the White Robe."

"Perhaps," said Locke, a little moodily. "It's pretty visionary, though. When Hunt is found murdered and scalped some day, the White Robe, as you call it, will awaken to the fact that those skulking devils are merely biding their time, and that you can't fight ingrained treachery that way. My father says — some day I will tell you my father's name, Miss Mendenhall, and meanwhile you will keep my secret, will you not? — my father says that no one, not even the Government, dreams of the colossal burden Indian Affairs will be to the nation for generations — centuries, perhaps — yet to come. It is a problem of such magnitude that we have shrunk from the responsibility and have evaded and shifted and postponed and pushed along and compromised, until now — I am speaking for myself now — until now I see no other way than to force the issue

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

without a waste of more time or lives or prestige. Crush the dream once and for all of a rehabilitated hunting ground on this continent. Do it with arms. Whip the foolish dreamers into submission to the dominant race. I can see no other way."

"I am beginning to think there is one other way," said Katharine, softly.

"Tell me what it is."

"The way of the White Robe."

"What is that way, Miss Mendenhall?"

"We can make brothers of them and comrades and — and — *fellow citizens*," said Katharine. "Why not?"

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN OF MANY MEMORIES SPEAKS TO THE BRULES

MANY tipis reared their smoke-blackened apexes into the bright shimmering atmosphere as the drivers climbed the last hill and looked across the valley. Many horsemen were seen gathered at the Lower Agency. Many unmounted Indians lounged about the grounds. There were placid movement and vivid color. It was a great day for the Brules. This was the day when their Great Father at Washington gave them, out of his abundance, food to eat and clothes to wear. It was true that the clothes were distributed hit or miss and therefore never could show the recipient to advantage as having adopted the dress of civilization. Nevertheless, fit or no fit, they were white man's clothes, and for that reason they were fondly though erroneously supposed to be an incentive toward living the way of the white man; and thus they were considered an important factor in hastening the day of Dakota regeneration. The distribution of these conglomerate misfits, however, had this merit; it was a wonderful salve to ease the national conscience.

In descending the hill, several cattle in the drive wandered away from the herd.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"You just ride steadily ahead, Miss Mendenhall, behind the main body, while Rufe and I round up the strays," said Locke, and spurred forward.

There seemed to be some sudden commotion among the Indians gathered at the Agency. A bunch of horsemen separated from the main throng and came toward the drive on a wild run, brandishing rifles and emitting excited, unintelligible yells as they ran.

"Father!" called Katharine, sharply.

So it had come at last. "The very next time you go into an Indian camp alone, back you go to the States," her father had said. If she had only never left the States — the tranquil States where people lived and let live! Ah, let live — that was all she asked — it was not much — just to be let to live! She had not meant to come to the Indian camp alone. She had meant to ride in with Locke Raynor and Rufe Moses and triumphantly to meet her father there — her father who was in authority over two big reservations of savages and was the friend of all. Big Neck they called him in loving admiration. Where was Big Neck now? Had they turned on him first and murdered him? Was this the beginning of a planned struggle to regain the old liberty and to possess the land free of suzerainty? She had not meant to ride in alone. That inconsequent thought ran through her mind like a refrain. "I didn't mean to come alone," she half-whispered, the while she gave one wild, longing glance back over the hills, calm and peaceful under the September sky. Too late. With a little sob, she turned her horse to go to

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

Locke Raynor. Rufe was galloping that way, too, and they three must make their short stand together. No doubt of hostile intent entered her mind. Every shrill yell sounded in her startled ears like a diabolical war whoop. She was conscious of a childish longing to clap her hands over her ears and shut her eyes till the horror of painted face and flying feather and thundering hoof-beat was past. But she dared not.

"Oh!" she said aloud, in soft, shuddering, lonely fear, as she saw her two companions of the drive start forward at a quick trot to meet the Indians alone, who outnumbered them many times. They could not hope to drive the war party back or to hold them there or to buy life. There could be no possible hope of anything merciful from the yelling, racing band who bore down upon them so swiftly. She wished the boys had remembered her before they had begun to ride so steadily forward to meet the awful charge. She felt very small and very lonesome sitting there, still and pale, waiting for the end of — everything.

Locke Raynor threw up his hand in warning or surrender — she could n't tell which — but the thundering cavalcade of bare-back riders paid not the slightest attention to it or to him. They swept on in an ecstasy of joy in the chase. It was then that Katharine became completely panic-stricken. She turned and fled in frantic fear. She had a good horse and she might yet distance the fiends. In the midst of her frenzy, she was conscious of a little welling of gratitude for every mad gallop through the blackberry lanes of that

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

old time. It gave her confidence now, so that gradually, as she gave herself up to the swift motion of her horse and felt the wind of her wild dash blowing against her until her hat fell back upon her shoulders and her hair loosened into flying tangled strands, her courage came back to her. There was this comforting thought to buoy her up besides: she was on Running Bird's reservation. This was his home. The courtesies and chivalrous protection which he had afforded her and hers on strange soil, surely he would not withhold from them on his native heath. If only she could maintain her distance till he became cognizant of the trouble which had so suddenly been brewed for Tahu Tanka's daughter. He was surely somewhere near. All the Brules would be gathered there to-day. Presently he would know, and then he would send out runners to halt the chase and to call back the murderers. He might even come himself. That would be better still. Running Bird was a man of influence among his people. They would hearken to him. And he was Hugh Hunt's friend. He would take care of his friend's friends. If only he might know soon now! Here were the hills. Suppose her horse should stumble! What was that? There it was again. Shooting! With all her strength, she rallied her failing senses and laid hold of some shreds of her courage which had been torn to tatters at the first sound of a shot. But hope altogether fell away. Running Bird was false. They were all false. What was it Locke Raynor had said? "You can't fight inherent treachery that way." Another shot.

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

Perhaps the next would strike her down—or the one after that. The strain of listening for whizzing bullets at last nerved her to look back. The Indians had scattered and were right and left chasing the stampeded cattle. Several quiet mounds lay upon the dusty plain. Locke Raynor was coming toward her on the run. Dazed, she waited for him. When he drew rein beside her, his face was grave and concerned. The dust of the stampede had settled in a fine gray film over his handsome features and rough riding clothes.

“What is it?” she asked, still uncomprehending.

“It is nothing,” he said. “Will you ever forgive me for deserting you like that? Just to think—and you did not understand. It never entered my thick skull that you might very naturally construe that fool affair into something serious. Once before I had heard those crazy bucks turned the cattle issue into a royal hunt, stampeding the beeves and then shooting them down like buffalo; so I knew at once what they were up to this time. I wanted to stop them. That is why I forgot you. It is monstrous. It must be stopped. It shall be stopped. I was taken unawares. It shall not occur again.” He shut his lips until only a thin line of determination was visible.

“It was very good of you not to laugh at me,” said Katharine, such a surge of relief flooding her face that his own became immediately gloomy with remorse. “Was Running Bird one of the rebels?”

“Running Bird, the sun-dancer? I don’t think so.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

I imagine he's too busy nursing his wounds. Otherwise, I do not doubt that firebrand would have joined the brotherhood of butchers."

"Do not blame them too much," said Katharine, softly and unexpectedly. "I should so much rather they would butcher beasts than people, and we have taken their buffalo from them, you know. Is it so strange that they yearn for those old days? They were not so very long ago."

As the drivers approached the Agency, the special inspector came to meet them. He was cool, well-dressed, a little supercilious, despite the frown on his forehead. As he came forward, he brushed infinitesimal specks of dust from his coat sleeve; but he forgot to touch his hat. Perhaps he did not recognize proud Katharine Mendenhall in this wind-blown, crumpled tomboy who rode with the issue clerk.

"Well," said the special inspector.

"Well," said the issue clerk.

"And is that all you have to say for yourself?"

"Concerning —" asked Locke, indifferently, and with a suspicion of drawl in his tone.

"Since you would feign such stupid ignorance," answered the inspector, with much stateliness, "I ask you to kindly explain the meaning of this outrageous butchery."

"Not being the butcher, I find it impossible to comply with your courteous request," replied Locke, with unruffled serenity. "Perhaps *you* will have the goodness to explain?"

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the inspector, indignantly.

"Nothing," responded Locke, with an insolence that was not so successfully concealed but that Katharine lifted her eyes to him in troubled protest. "I thought perhaps you knew; that is all. You were present when the deviltry was hatched."

"Young man, do you know who I am?" exclaimed the inspector, pale spots of anger showing in his face.

"If you are other than Special Inspector Warlick, sent out from Washington, no; but I shall be happy to know you," finished Locke, politely.

"I am glad to learn how the Government's hirelings distribute the Government's property," said the inspector, with forced composure. "I am here for that purpose. I ask you to remember that that is my business. I am also a witness, however unwillingly, to extreme impertinence on the part of an employee to — higher authority. I think I have said enough. Doubtless you understand me."

"Doubtless," agreed Locke, a dull red mantling his cheeks. "I am still troubled in my mind, however, why, when you were right on the ground, you did not make use of your — higher authority to prevent those crazy bucks from tearing out to stampede the herd."

"You are insolent, sir," rejoined the inspector, the very ecstasy of his rage holding him quiet. "To make use of your own rude phrasing, this not being my drive, it was none of my business. I will say, however, that

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

I imagine Indians, like other men, are very apt to do what they have been in the habit of doing."

"Where is my father?" interposed Katharine, before Locke could reply. "If it is such a crime, why did he not prevent it?"

"Your father, Miss Mendenhall, was — unaccountably absent," said the inspector, plainly hesitating before the word, as if he might have said "conveniently absent."

"He meant to be here," said Katharine, anxiously. "He has been unavoidably detained. I wonder what the matter can be?"

They were moving slowly toward the warehouse as she spoke. Her companions remained silent, Locke stubbornly refusing to carry the controversy farther, and the inspector glad of the opportunity afforded to recover somewhat of the dignity which the younger man had provoked him into losing, and which he was wont to consider an asset at all times. Presently Major Mendenhall drove up, his usually genial face perturbed, flushed, and travel-stained.

"What is this I have been hearing?" he demanded at once. "What is the meaning of all this confusion? Is it true that my commands have been again disobeyed? Speak up, somebody. Are you all dumb?"

"I am ready to report, Major," began Locke, when the inspector interrupted him.

"You are late on the ground, my dear Major. Doubtless you were unavoidably detained?"

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

Locke snapped his jaws together like a clam and waited.

“Great guns, man, what would I be doing here at this time of day if I had n’t been detained?” cried the Major, irascibly. “Why did n’t somebody stop this infernal business anyway? Are you all dolts?”

“That is just what I should like to know,” said Warlick, with complacence. “Why was n’t this — infernal business — stopped? That is what I said to Mr. Raynor here. If I mistake not, he was in command of the drive. It was for him to maintain the proper decorum. But he came tearing down the hills like a madman or a cowboy, and this naturally excited the Indians. They immediately broke bounds and were off like the wind, whooping and yelling, and that in turn excited the cattle and they were off with the bucks in full chase. And then came the indecent slashing and grabbing of the carcasses. Naturally, I looked to the one in temporary authority to quash the insubordination and the revolting butchery at once. To my astonishment, Major, Mr. Raynor did nothing. Nothing, I repeat. Nothing, that is, but to sharpen his impertinence upon me. I ask for his dismissal from the service.”

“Oh, well, it could n’t be helped,” said the Major, his quick temper dying as suddenly as it had arisen, when he perceived how seriously the inspector was taking the affair and how seriously it might result for the issue clerk. He himself had blamed nobody, and meant nothing by his recent explosion of temper but a vent for a

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

surplusage of chagrin toward the accumulation of circumstances which had conspired to delay him on the road. "Nothing under heaven could stop those crazy bucks once get them started. It is a deplorable accident, but I really see nothing that Raynor could have done, under the circumstances."

"I am here to testify that he seemed to take such a gross exhibition entirely as a matter of course. Doubtless it is not the first time such a thing has happened. It seemed strangely prearranged," said the inspector, glibly.

"It is the first time for Raynor, anyway," explained the Major, good-naturedly. "This is his first drive; so I think we may easily overlook the fault, if fault there is. Candidly, I don't see how he could have helped it. If I had been here — but I was n't; so what's the use of wasting breath on the supposition?"

"And besides, father," put in Katharine, composedly, "we were not tearing down the hill like madmen. The boys were simply rounding up the strays, and I was coming on behind with the greatest decorum, I assure you."

"I beg leave to disclaim any intent of implicating Miss Mendenhall in this atrocious affair," said the inspector, suavely.

"It has happened before," said the Major, beginning to get cross at circumstances again. "But I told the Brules that it simply must not occur again, and they promised to conform to my wishes. I thought they would keep faith with me."

"Did n't it ever strike you, Major Mendenhall, that

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

there must be poor management somewhere, or all this could not take place? It has occurred before, you say; it occurred to-day — it will occur next time — and indefinitely — all the while strengthening the people in their bloody instincts. It seems to me that it must be the result of mismanagement somewhere.”

“Perhaps it is, and perhaps it is n’t,” said the Major, shortly and resentfully, then and there conceiving a hearty hatred for the special inspector.

“Then you would n’t care to dismiss this young man from your service?” asked the inspector, a mask of smiling inscrutability settling down over his countenance.

“Not without more provocation than you allege in your complaint of to-day,” returned the Major, curtly. “I shall immediately, however, take steps to settle it, once and for all, that the young bucks have had their last fling at hunting cattle. Does any one know whether Hugh Hunt is here or not?”

“I think he intended to come,” said Katharine.

“I saw him about two hours ago,” said Warlick.

“I am very glad. I can’t get along without that young fellow when it comes to heart to heart talks with the people. He is the best interpreter I ever knew. He speaks Dakota far better than the natives. It’s a fact. He’s a whole lot better Indian than the Indians. Come with me and I will show you how I am quashing future demonstrations.”

He despatched messengers to call all the Indians together. It did not take them long to mobilize. They

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

came slipping in from all directions until the meeting-place was a mass of dark, interested faces, shot with bright flashes of green and scarlet and blue where porcupine quill and bead blazed the trail of the trader. They sat upon the ground, grave and attentive. A barrel was rolled into the centre of the crowd and stood on end. From a near-by group rose an old man with whom the Missionary had been in earnest conversation. He was so old that, like White Flower's grandmother, his hair was snow white, and the wrinkles of his brooding face were many and deep. His frail body was bent but his step was reasonably firm. He was wrapped in a blanket, despite the heat of the day, but his scant white locks were uncovered. It was said of him that he was more than a hundred years old and remembered the day when the Teton Sioux, after forty years of prairie warfare, finally forced the Rees to seek new homes in the North and to leave them in undisputed possession of the buffalo country. So, a hundred years after the Chippewas in the timbered north of Minnesota drove out his ancestors and made of them nomads, this old man was said to remember that day when they, in turn, gained sovereignty over all the fair buffalo lands west of the great river. And now another hundred years were gone into the dim Indian past, and the Sioux still held this sovereignty; and the man who remembered was still living, so that much honor was his among all the prairie tribes, and his person was held sacred. Without assistance and with dignity, he walked slowly and thought-

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

fully to the barrel and mounted it. The people became very still.

"My people," he said, "I have a word for you from our father, Tahu Tanka."

His voice was husky with age but it carried to the furthestmost confines of the assembled company. Because his words were always just and wise, they were ever listened to with the most flattering attention and seldom, if ever, did they fail to carry much influence at the council fires of the Sioux nation. But for more than the intrinsic worth of his counsels was he accorded the most honor among the tribes, and that was because he was the sole living participator of the greatest glory in the history of the Dakotas. So to-day when their Agent, Big Neck, called them together in council extraordinary and appointed White Shield to speak his will to the people, they listened to him. Therefore, he needed no strong voice.

"Tahu Tanka is angry with you. You run the cattle. Then you cut out their entrails and grab for them and are very greedy. Sometimes you cut them out while they still are living and strong. That is not the white man's way, my children. Tahu Tanka said to me this to say to you. Another time the young men may not run the cattle. They are not buffalo. It is not the hunt. You may not any of you cut into any cattle until they are properly dead. When this is so, then you may take your portion of the beef for the jerking. Tahu Tanka says this is so. I am an old

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

man. It is nothing to me. I shall not eat of any meat very long now. It is many years since I have followed the hunt. I am an old man. It is nothing to me. But the young men will listen. They will remember what I say to them."

There was a slight disturbance on the outskirts of the seated multitude where a number of the younger men had ridden up while old White Shield was speaking. It was peremptorily silenced by some of the older ones and the monotonous but impelling voice went on.

"Many of us remember when there was no one to say to us, You shall — You shall not. But that was very long ago. That is not to-day. Our Great Father at Washington has promised that there shall never be any famine any more. When the buffalo are all gone, he will give us beef. He keeps his promises. He gives us beef now because the buffalo are very scarce and we would be hungry. He does not forget us. He gives us flour and all to eat that we need. We are never hungry any more. It is good not to be hungry. Our Great Father is very powerful. He can feed all the Indian nations and he has promised that we shall never be hungry. Tahu Tanka says our Great Father will always take care of us. This is because we gave him all our land except the Great Reservation, which is never to be taken from us. He has promised. But Tahu Tanka says that you may not hunt the cattle any more and you may not butcher them alive. That is not the Great Father's way. He gives us food, not a hunting frolic. That is Tahu Tanka's word. That is cruel.

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

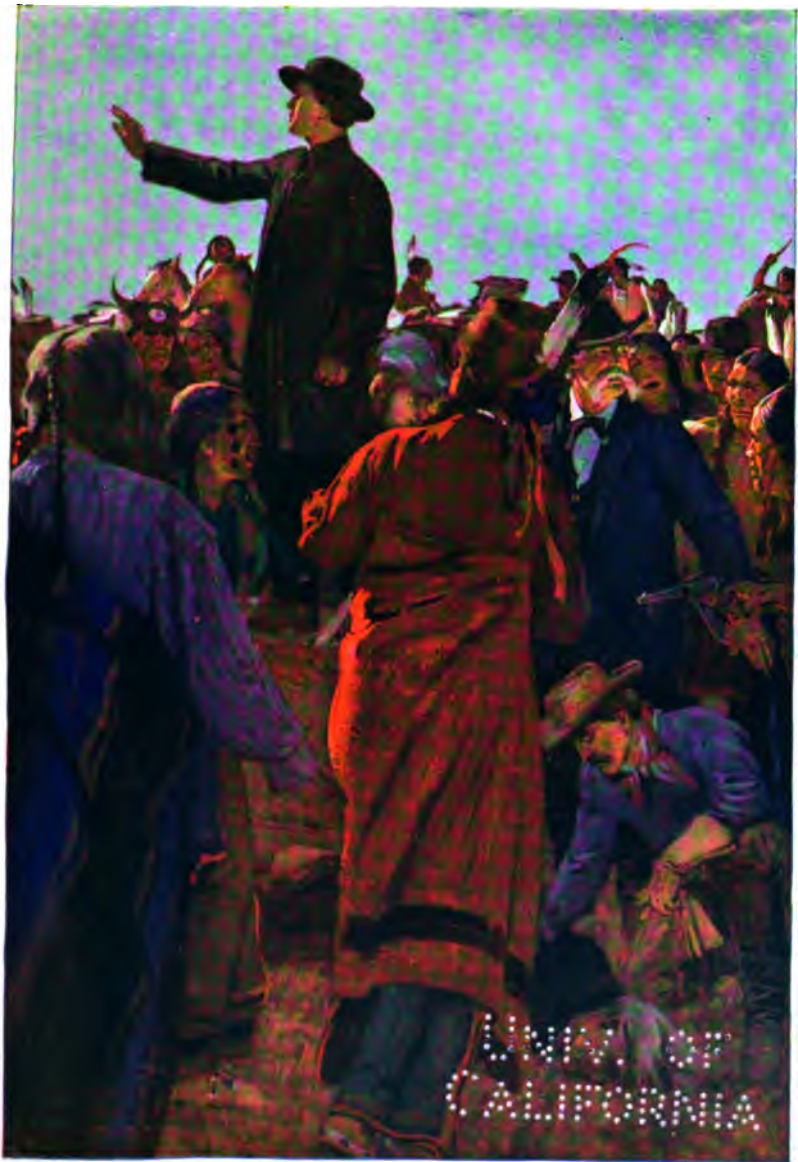
And because the cattle are his, we must take the gift in his way. And is not that right? That is as it should be. Tahu Tanka said to me to say to you, my children, that if you do these things another time, another time there will be no beef on issue day. I am an old man. I do not care. It is nothing to me. But the young men will listen —”

From the ranks of the riders on the outskirts came a ribald shout and then a pistol shot. A look of questioning surprise came into the old man's dreamy, furrowed face for a moment and he brushed a stray lock of white hair from his forehead. But his expression changed quickly and gleamed with a haughty defiance of all his enemies, while his eyes flashed forth the fires of this defiance. His bent figure straightened till it took on the likeness of the youth of a Dakota brave who had hunted well, who had fought well, who was dying well. He was a very old man and the minds of the old dwell much in the past. Perhaps, in this his hour of passing, he was remembering the enemies of his young manhood so that his body unconsciously assumed the likeness of that far-away time. The look of strange, intense, deadly defiance was the last look his people saw. When he sank down into the arms of the Missionary who, seeing, had sprung forward to catch him as the barrel tottered under his falling weight, the old thoughtful, resigned, reminiscent expression had come back to the deeply seamed old face. But he was dead then.

When the stunned listeners realized that White Shield

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

had been shot down wantonly, they were on their feet to a man. They heard the thunder of fleeing hoofs and the thunder of yet others in pursuit as the grandson of White Shield, several times removed, leaped astride a quickly proffered pony and raced madly after the murderer, firing incessantly as he ran. As he dashed through the thinned outer ranks, someone, presumably a friend of the fleeing man, shot at him point blank but he kept on with stoical disregard of the bullet that tore through his shoulder. He was the old man's sole surviving descendant. The murderer must die the death by his hand—none other's. Before the man who was endeavoring to protect the retreat of the murderer could fire again, he himself fell, a bullet through his heart. The wildest confusion reigned. Men scarcely knew who might show themselves enemies. Many weapons were drawn. Unearthly cries rent the still air—cries of woe, of vengeance, of threat, of war, mingled shrilly with the wailing of women. A general shooting *mêlée* was imminent. Perhaps worse. There were those who did not know by whose hand White Shield had fallen. There were many who thought that their great enemy, the white man, had killed him. Who else, then? Were not all the rest of them Brules? Would they kill the best beloved of them all? The Agent, helpless in this unlooked-for crisis, was at that moment in graver danger than he knew. So was the yellow-haired girl by his side. So were Locke Raynor and the special inspector there to see how Major Mendenhall would enforce his new issue law. But they were none of them



"My people," he began, "stay your hands. Put away your weapons"

to visit
Singapore

MAN OF MANY MEMORIES

in half so grave a danger as was Hugh Hunt when, warned by the mutterings and evil glances of all around him, he gently relinquished his frail burden and sprang upon the barrel where so lately another had talked to this same people.

"I thank God for Hugh Hunt," said the Agent, with almost a sob of relief.

"Not too soon," said the inspector, anxiously. "They will murder him. Look at their faces! The fool's life is n't worth a picayune. For God's sake, Major, send for the troops and meanwhile let us retire to the Agency!"

But the Agent was watching Hugh Hunt and he did not hear the warning. The Missionary did not speak at once. He stood quiet for a moment, alone in a multitude of unfriendly faces, as if saying to them: "You are my people. I am not afraid."

"My people," he began, in perfect Dakota and in a clear, firm, authoritative voice which yet thrilled with a minor note of compassion for the life so ruthlessly put out, "stay your hands. Put away your weapons. He who murdered your grand old man is an Indian, like you. Will you turn on one another because, unknowingly, you have harbored one among you who was not worthy? You cry for vengeance. My children, Black Bull has ridden out on a very fleet horse in pursuit of the treacherous ingrate. If *Wakantanka* * ever gives it into the hands of his children to work vengeance upon their enemies, is it not right that the murdered

* Great Holy One.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

man's only relative should be the one chosen? I say, if *Wakantanka* ever gives us the right of personal vengeance. Soon I shall show you a better way — a far better way. But now it is right that Black Bull should bring the murderer back so that he shall not transgress again. Black Bull will bring him back. You need not be afraid. When he returns, shall he find his grandfather still lying down there upon the ground, neglected and forgotten, his white hair dishonored by his own people? Put your ears to the earth. Do you hear the running beat of a horse's hoofs returning? Haste you, then, and bear this body where it may be prepared for the burial fitting a man so old, so wise, so loved, and so honored by all the tribes, so that when his kinsman returns, he may find you mourning for the great soul who has gone. Where are your women? Come! *Wakantanka* has called White Shield to a far happier hunting ground than he ever knew on earth. His soul has gone. But his body has need of the care of his friends. Come then and mourn for this man of many memories!"

The appeal went home. But long before Black Bull returned alone, vengeance still unsatisfied, it was known that Mad Wolf it was who had murdered the wise old man and that he was drunk when he did it.

All night long, the women wailed the death chant over the body of the man of many memories.

CHAPTER X

THE DORSEY GANG

CORROBORATION of the rumor that Mad Wolf was drunk when he murdered the aged White Shield was given by members of Running Bird's own band, from fellowship with which the fugitive must henceforth be cut off, and accounted a renegade and a bad man. To deliver him, if caught, into the hands of the murdered man's only surviving relative or even to the justice of the hated military — who would soon be scouring the country in search — would be considered a point of honor by the rest of the band. Mad Wolf was drunk. There was no doubt of that. But he had no right to be drunk. From whence, then, did he possess himself of the wherewithal to be so? Who was guilty of smuggling the contraband stuff into the Indian country?

"I think you will have to tell me, Major," said Inspector Warlick, in a voice whose smooth quietness was some way ominous. "Several Indians say, through this preacher interpreter, that the liquor was procured from some people who are conducting a road-house on the other side of the river. That is your own domain, Major. I think I should like to know something about these most interesting road-house people."

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Well, then damn 'em, and the sooner the better," replied Major Mendenhall, with heat. "If you want to know any more, you'll have to go below and watch 'em sizzle when I'm through with them."

"Very forcible but hardly to the point," said the Inspector. "I think I shall have to know, my dear Major, everything that you know about these keepers of a mysterious stage-house."

"And I wish you well of the knowledge!" exploded the sorely exasperated Agent. "Precious little good it seems to have done me. Some time ago, I had occasion to run three men off the Reservation for selling whiskey to the Indians. They came back empty-handed. They made promises. I believed them. Wherein I was a consummate fool. They asked and obtained permission to operate the road-house at the Crossing."

"It comes to my mind," said Mr. Warlick, with a disagreeable smile, "that an isolated road-house, on a lonesome trail through the broken country of American Creek, might present some suggestive possibilities to the imagination of an Indian Agent. Doubtless I am mistaken. Nevertheless —"

"If I read my commission aright," interrupted the Major, bluntly, "I am here to deal with facts not fancies. The service recognizes no imagination. Now that I have facts to grapple with, why, I grapple, that's all. Where is Locke Raynor? This day sees him and me at the Crossing."

"Not you, Major. There are some pressing matters of business that I should very much like to discuss with

THE DORSEY GANG

you at once. Send this Raynor alone. He seems a husky fellow. Or give him attendance if you deem it necessary. I confess to an ignorance of how your canny inn-keepers will receive a notice of abdication. This seems a bloodthirsty land. But you remain. I want a word with you."

"To hell with your importance and your impertinence," was in Major Mendenhall's mind to say, but he thought better of it, for the time being, at least, and with a short, "So be it," he turned and walked away to find Locke Raynor, and to confer upon him authority to rid the Reservation of the vicious interlopers.

"Let me go alone," was Locke's immediate request when the situation was explained to him. "If they refuse to obey your orders, then it is time enough to send men to enforce them. But let me bear the message alone."

"Why are you so enamored of your own company?" asked the Major, curiously. "Do you know that these Dorseys have the reputation of being pretty handy with guns?"

"I have so understood," said Locke.

"And you still wish to go alone?"

"If you please."

"I am perfectly willing, if you will give me your word that there will be no fighting or physical coercion," said Major Mendenhall, surveying his clerk's lithe body doubtfully.

"You have it — unless I myself am coerced," returned Locke, with a slow, enigmatical smile.

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

"I am not one of those against whom the edict of 'keep off' has gone forth, am I?" asked Hugh Hunt, suddenly. He had been standing near but had hitherto remained silent. "I never carry a gun. My muscles are flabby from disuse. How then, should I dare dream of sharing with Mr. Raynor any of the glory of pointing out the boundary line to these doughty Dorseys? I desire to go for company alone. If he will have me, I promise Major Mendenhall that I shall not aid or abet him in any rash show of immediate violence."

"Are you really indefatigable?" asked Locke, in wonder. "After that timely speech to your dusky, troublesome friends, followed by those hours of strenuous mourning with them, I should think a little rest and an Agency bed would present an irresistible appeal to you. Are you never weary?"

"On the contrary," said the Missionary, slowly, "I am often very weary." And Major Mendenhall and Locke Raynor, looking at the drawn face, knew that it was so, and that it was days like this one just passing that told, and that set the sensitive soul of him a-quiver in the telling. "But it is not very far to the Crossing," continued Hugh, recovering himself with a winning smile, "and I should like to go — if you will have me."

"And I should like nothing better than your companionship," agreed Locke, heartily. And so it was arranged that the two should go together to the road-house with Major Mendenhall's order of evacuation.

T H E D O R S E Y G A N G

"You won't fight, will you?" asked Katharine, slipping between the horses with a hand for each of the men.

"Not if I can help it," said Locke, unconscious of the number of the pronoun he used so thoroughly was he imbued with the notion that the Missionary would not fight under any circumstances.

"Which means that you will," she half-whispered. "Mr. Hunt, won't you — just this once — please carry a gun? I'll get you father's. I know how you feel about your Indians — but the Dorseys are not Indians." She turned, but he stayed her with a gentle pressure, shaking his head with an inscrutable but kindly smile.

"Don't worry about us, Miss Mendenhall," said Locke, his heart stirred by the fine sincerity of her solicitude. "We shall return to-morrow. You have my word."

It was late afternoon when the two young men drew rein before the same unhappy-looking way-house where they had once sought rest and refreshment — obtaining neither, even as neither would be granted them this second time of their visitation. It had been a hard, full day for Locke Raynor. Harking back, momentarily, to the start from Big Bend in the cool hush of the early morning, that time seemed very far away in the past. Truly, events moved rapidly in the Indian country. One must be up and doing to keep pace with the march. He was grateful to his *alma mater* for his splendid physique. There was little danger of the strain of these busy days pulling him down to any appreciable

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

extent. Rather did he already feel himself toughened and enlivened by the compelling stress of his new environment.

They dismounted, tied their horses to runty scrub oaks, and pushed open the sagging door. There seemed to be no one within.

"Hello, there! Anybody around?" cried Locke, as he strode toward the door leading into the rear room.

"Hello, yourself! What's all the racket about?" answered a somewhat querulous voice, and Dorsey, the elder, opened the door and lounged in. "Oh, it's you, is it?" he added, with an abrupt change of voice. "Think you'll want anything to eat this time, now that you've shook the women folks?" A jocular note had crept into his tones, albeit his pale eyes were watchfully on the defensive.

"You need n't bother about supper," said Locke. "We had a bite in our saddle bags. Is Pete here?"

"Not far away, I reckon. He was here a minute ago."

"He always seems to be pretty near," said Locke, meaningly. "Such filial devotion is touching, to say the least. If I am not mistaken, one Joe Hilary is in your employ in the capacity of cook?"

"You are not mistaken," said the elder Dorsey, with a fine unconcern.

"Will you call your son and this Joe Hilary?"

"Sure. Just make yourselves to home, both of ye. Have a chair, Mr. Hunt. It's wobbly in the legs but it won't break down. It ain't scarcely been set in since

T H E D O R S E Y G A N G

that piece of fine imported china belongin' to the Major was here that time you all stopped to see if you could n't scare up a jug o' whiskey for the crowd. Right sorry I could n't accommodate you I was, too."

He stopped talking long enough to laugh heartily at his own joke, and then sauntered to the door.

"Oh, Pete! Hello there, Pete!" he called, in stentorian tones. "Company to see you! Hurry along, can't you? Leave that wall-eyed sawbones to his own dee-vices for a while and hurry in! Drop your apron, Joe," he continued, in a lower voice. "These gentlemen ain't a-wantin' no sepper. They're a-wantin' your company instead. So come in and make your purtiest Sunday School bow, 'cause the preacher's here. He wants to know how is your soul — not how is your stummick." He winked broadly at his unwelcome guests, tipped his chair against the wall, and proceeded to enjoy a smoke in a leisurely appreciative manner.

Joe Hilary came slipping in, wiping floury hands on the apron which he had failed to discard. He was an under-sized, youngish looking man with a shifting eye and an apologetic smile. Locke surveyed him with a quiet contempt. If there should be a fight, count out the cook. When Peter Dorsey's surly face and gigantic frame appeared, however, he could not but fairly acknowledge that here was an adversary on whom he would do well to keep an eye.

"Well, what's wanted?" demanded Pete, gruffly.

"You are," replied Locke, promptly. He had remained standing. He was not so tall nor so burly as

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Pete but he was not afraid. He only wanted to be ready. "You are wanted to leave this Reservation at once in company with your father, Philip Dorsey, and Joe Hilary, your alleged cook — and you are especially requested not to return. You comprehend that last statement? You are *never* to come back."

"You don't say!" ejaculated Philip, in well simulated surprise.

"Not by a damned sight do we leave this Reservation," said the loud-mouthed son, explosively.

"My land alive, on what charge?" appealed Joe Hilary, speaking for the first time. His voice was high and womanish.

"On the specific charge of again — mind you, *again* — selling liquor to the Indians," said Locke. "If you are not off the Reservation in the morning, Major Mendenhall will send a squad of United States soldiers to take you all into custody; and I imagine things will not be quite so easy with you when Uncle Sam takes hold. He is not the lenient taskmaster that Major Mendenhall is. You will find him different. I'm thinking you will do well to heed the Agent this time."

"Eat your mush!" interrupted Pete, contemptuously. "You're a-wastin' a lot of good time, and mine's valuable, if yours ain't. Stick to plain language, Mr. Tin Soldier, and you and me 'll get along better."

"With all my heart," agreed Locke, a twinkle of fun in his eyes. "Here goes, then, for plain language 'twixt thee and me, Peter Dorsey, now and forevermore." His voice suddenly became crisp and stern. "Get off

THE DORSEY GANG

the Reservation to-night! Take your hypocrite of a father and your coward of a cook and your dirty traps and get! Cross the border to-night! To-night!"

"I guess not!" raged Pete. "You're mighty free with your orders. There ain't a drop of whiskey in this house or on these premises, and there ain't been since we took to runnin' a road-house. You find your whiskey before you get so blamed free with your gab. Bring on your proofs and go a little easy on your words while you're a-doin' it. I might n't be very tender with you if you slop over too much."

"And don't forget that we are American citizens trying to earn an honest living and are such until proved otherwise," put in the elder Dorsey, gently blowing rings of blue smoke toward the low, blackened ceiling.

"That is only fair," said Locke, quietly, after a moment of thought. "I imagine the Government won't waste much time to-morrow looking up further proof than that furnished by those bucks who know where Mad Wolf got his 'fire-water' and who to-day are mourning very bitterly the foul murder of White Shield. All the Brules are mourning to-day. But I am willing to leave you in possession until then, if I fail in my quest. I think I can convince you this evening that you are as guilty as hell. First, you have no objection to my searching the premises, of course? I am a duly authorized officer acting under orders."

"Go ahead—but it's an outrage just the same," stormed Peter, who did not flinch at this first intimation of the murder that had been done. Joe Hilary's face,

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

however, was overspread with a sickly pallor; but Locke was not looking at Joe Hilary. "I suppose you won't be convinced of our innocence any other way," continued Peter, "so go ahead and be quick about it and don't slight the corners or between the mattresses because you won't get in again in a hurry. You'd better be thorough while you've got the chance."

"Will you promise to go at once without any more trouble if I find anything?"

"Sure," agreed Pete, derisively.

"Will you come?" said Locke to the Missionary.

Hugh Hunt arose at once and the two proceeded to make a thorough and systematic search of that room, of the kitchen, and of the tiny attic, climbing a shaky and impossible-looking ladder for the latter purpose. They went outside and searched the sod barn, prodding every inch of hay in the rude loft and the straw bedding strewn on the dirt floor for the horses. They overlooked no conceivable place, within or without, within a reasonable radius. And yet, what a crooked creek was American Creek, and between what innumerable broken hills and through how many virgin thickets it wound its tortuous way to the river! There might be an illicit wine cellar in any one of a thousand secluded spots in the valley. But if it was so, must there not be some little hint of it somewhere — an empty bottle, a torn label, a tell-tale odor?

"I see nothing left but the testimony of those bucks of Running Bird's," said Locke, keenly disappointed, as they walked back to the house, which was set back

T H E D O R S E Y G A N G

against a hill that sloped down to the creek. The hill had been dug out a little and formed the north wall of the house.

All during the investigation, the road-house keepers had remained unconcerned in the sitting-room; but Peter had strolled to the open door while the search was in progress outside.

"Find anything?" asked Philip Dorsey, with a fine assumption of indifference.

"Nothing — yet," replied Locke, shortly.

"Well, then," said Peter, harshly, "make yourself scarce, will you?"

"Presently," responded Locke, dreamily.

The Missionary glanced at him quickly. Something in the tone of his voice bespoke a new thought. Locke sauntered carelessly over to the north wall and put his hand on a board which was nailed tightly to the wall, to all intents and purposes merely strengthening a defective place. Stooping suddenly, he snatched up a hatchet which lay on the floor and began prying off the plank.

"Drop that!" cried Peter, in a loud voice. "We're perfectly willing for you to search the premises — stay all night if you like and begin over again in the mornin' — but when it comes to tearin' down a man's house, why, that's different; and I, for one, ain't a-goin' to stand for it. Drop that hatchet, I say!"

No one seemed to be paying any attention to the apologetic cook, who continued to wrap his floury hands in his apron; but Locke kept a wary eye on the burly

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

Pete while he calmly gave the board another wrench. As for Philip, Philip went on smoking.

It was Joe Hilary who suddenly and unexpectedly jerked his right hand from under his apron disclosing therein an ugly, cocked revolver. But the Missionary was as quick as he. He had not trusted the grin from the beginning. His foot shot out and the fellow sprawled upon the floor, his pistol spinning into the corner, surprised out of his clutch by the unexpectedness of the attack from that quarter. This, Hugh Hunt promptly confiscated. The Dorseys, father and son, leaped upon Locke simultaneously, but before they knew just what was happening or how it was happening, they found themselves on the floor by the side of their comrade, with Locke and the Missionary standing side by side, each covering them with a revolver. Hugh was smiling his admiration.

"I can't quite make up my mind whether you are a college athlete or a pugilist," he said to his friend, laughingly. "When I saw you throw the old man without effort at all, I thought it was the trained trickery of wrestling schools; but when I saw you hand Pete one in the jaw which alone sent that Cyclops sprawling, I put it down to muscle, pure and simple. Please enlighten me."

"I wonder what you would call that little act of yours?" said Locke, grimly. "I sha'n't be doubtful of your fighting qualities any more, Hunt. Take my gun, will you, and keep these fellows covered while I proceed with my most interesting investigations. No

THE DORSEY GANG

gun on you, Mr. Philip? No? Good for you. You told the truth for once, anyway. Yes, Peter, here is yours. Don't perjure yourself. I'm right glad you did n't see fit to draw it." He kept the confiscated revolver in his hand while the surly Peter looked on in convulsed but helpless rage.

"Here, Raynor, you take them," said Hugh. "I'll get the whiskey."

"Why?" asked Locke, in surprise. "You are n't afraid, are you? They'll be as meek as lambs if you just keep those muzzles straight."

"You see," explained the Missionary, deprecatingly, "they might think that, because I'm a preacher, I would n't shoot. Now they know you would — that it would be sort of a pleasure to you, in fact — but they might test me. You take the guns, Raynor."

"Indeed I will," said Locke, suiting the action to the words, but he could not help wondering about the Missionary. He did not seem a coward and he, Locke, should never forget the quick tripping that saved his life. He had never known any one like this man. He could not help wondering.

Hugh Hunt stepped lightly to the north wall and finished prying off the board before the scowling gaze of the prostrate road-house keepers. The action disclosed a yawning hole which seemed to extend back into the hill. He quickly lighted a match and a small cave was revealed, piled high with bottles of liquor. He pulled out a bottle and held it up silently to Locke's view; then he drew out another and another, with a

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

gesture indicative of his opinion that he could repeat the act indefinitely.

"Can you explain the presence of those bottles back there in the cave?" asked Locke, sharply.

No one deigned a reply, but all three looked longingly at their confiscated firearms.

"Now, this is what you are to do and to do at once," proceeded Locke, with stern deliberateness. "Listen to me, if you please. I am using plain language, Peter, very plain language. I think you can understand it. Pack up your things, put them on your wagon, and leave the Reservation to-night. Do not come back. You will be very sorry if you ever do. It will mean the penitentiary next time. It should have meant it this time, only for Major Mendenhall's leniency. My friend and I will wait here for you to go. This stuff, being contraband, we shall just destroy, for fear you might meet an Indian with a tickle in his throat before you have crossed the border. Your guns you may have when I have taken out the loads. You promised to go without trouble. Now move!"

It did not take long for the men to pack up their few belongings. Their effects seemed to be such as would warrant one in the notion that the owners had ever in mind a hasty or unexpected leave taking. They maintained a stubborn silence, though the Dorseys were defiantly noisy in the throwing together of their household goods. Joe Hilary, on the contrary, moved about, cat-like.

The sun was just going down when they climbed into

THE DORSEY GANG

the wagon. From a leafy covert stepped Running Bird. He was gaunt yet from the strain of the dance but he had recovered much of his strength. He said nothing, answered no greeting.

Peter Dorsey turned in his seat. His pale eyes were almost black with rage. His expression was the acme of malignancy. For once his voice was not loud. It was as if his great wrath had consumed the strength of it.

"It is not the end," he said. "I will get even." It was upon Locke Raynor that his malevolent glance rested.

Philip whipped up the horses, and the rickety buck-board creaked up the hill and so out of sight, as dusk came to the valley.

"They are bad men," then spoke Running Bird, unemotionally. "They will come back before the wolves of Wazeattah Wechastah * make the snow to fly. White people forget. But our old men will be safe until then. I am very glad."

He would not remain with Locke and the Missionary for the night, but slipped back into the timber, where his pony was tethered, and disappeared into the fast gathering darkness.

* God of the North.

CHAPTER XI

THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

SO excited were the Brules over the murder of White Shield that not until the following day did Major Mendenhall deem it wise to proceed with the issuing of rations to this turbulent tribe. Even then morose looks and in-dwelling fires of revolt characterized the silent gathering of the chiefs and heads of families at the Lower Agency. All were sober — the young men as well as the old. There was no more whiskey in Big Neck's jurisdiction. What the Dorseys had so cleverly concealed had already trickled down the meandering creek to the river, whose sands had doubtless before this scoured to a comely purity the sick tints of the rotten brew; and the Dorseys themselves had crossed the border in the night. What Mad Wolf had — if indeed any was left to him after the long night of his desperate struggle to lose himself and be seen of his people no more — was with him somewhere on the wide and lonely expanses of the Great Reservation, pursuing with him his hunted and resentful way to the west — ever to the west, to lose himself yet more unfindably in the mountains, perhaps, where he would not be alone, and yet where neither the old man's grandson nor Running

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

Bird nor any of his band would ever follow him, because they were poor in spirit and listened to the pretty talk of the pale-face. No, there would be no drunken madness to-day; and yet stalking beside the gloomy warriors of other days were the ghosts of the past, and the ghosts of the past are the gods of the present to the prairie folk. They are of a wonderful and peculiar power in holding allegiance.

Among the supposedly friendly tribes there were still those wary and wild ones who refused to accept this partial payment of the nation's debt, seeing in it only tricks and a confession of subjection; but these were few in number, and that number was steadily decreasing. Most of them were glad enough to take their share of the heaped-up flour and sugar and bacon and coffee — thus never to be hungry any more in the lean years and never to labor in the fat ones. Many of these, indeed, laughed, filling themselves daily to repletion while the good things lasted and thinking how little difference it would make with them when the time came to strike. But these, too, were becoming fewer in number and were of that too populous class who had had nothing to do with the Laramie Treaty, who did not understand it, and who doubtless never would, and who therefore held themselves absolutely unbound by its moral obligations.

The chiefs received in proportion to the number in their particular tribes; then each chief took his measure of the flour, the sugar, the bacon, and the coffee, and emptied it out in heaps on buffalo robes. All

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

this was accomplished with the dignity and form dear to the hearts of the ceremony-loving red man, crude though his manifestation of it may be, and the strange scene was brilliant with color and flaunting feather. To the buffalo robe came the head of each family belonging to that particular band, and to this head was given in proportion to the number of individuals in his family. It was a long and arduous task to the clerks but the Indians delighted in it, however much the shadow of the murdered man came between them and unalloyed enjoyment of the great festal day. This shadow had not lifted when finally the work was done and the busy Agent and his corps of assistants were hastening back to Big Bend.

The shadow lay heavy on Hugh Hunt's heart; for thus, he knew, reasoned the Dakotas: "If it were not for the pale-face, we should be hunting buffalo and not starved cattle of the ranges; and if those beeves had not been forced upon us, our young men would not have been found fault with; and if they had not been found fault with, old White Shield would not have talked to them; and if he had not talked to them, his voice would still be heard in the councils of our people. Again, you must not drink fire-water, says the white man. But who makes the fire-water? Does the poor Indian?" So, on account of the shadow, the Missionary did not return with the Agency party, but lingered for awhile among the Brules.

Scarcely had Locke Raynor washed the dust and perspiration of the homeward trail from his warm face,

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

and began to contemplate longingly from his window the wavering green line that marked the course of the river, and to wonder if he would have time to seek a shady spot on the bank from which to take a plunge into the cool water, when he was summoned to ride out and assist in the receiving of cattle which the contractors were ready to consign to the Government. With a sigh, he gave up all thoughts of a bath for the present, and, running a comb through his wet and tousled hair, hastened away to keep the appointment. In spite of sundry little premonitory aches which told him that he was sadly in need of rest, he was in high spirits. Warlick had asked for his resignation. It was only through Major Mendenhall's good-natured refusal to accede to the request until the new clerk had been fairly tried that he had been able to justify that faith by the altogether successful removal of the Dorseys and their goods and chattels from the Major's domain. He had wanted to do what he had so lately done immediately after his arrival at the Agency; but the Major had informed him that he had given the Dorseys permission to operate the road-house and that he did not believe they had sold any whiskey since assuming the management of it. He had been obliged to acquiesce in the Major's decision but he had not trusted the Major's perspicacity. If, at first, he had been inclined to doubt the Agent's honesty of intention, and with his worldly knowledge of men's motives ascribed to him, involuntarily, a bit of official chicanery in regard to the staying of the Dorseys, he had since greatly modi-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

fied this impression. In the first place, he had learned that Major Mendenhall had received his appointment by grace of him called the Indians' Apostle. The work of civilization being so closely allied to the work of Christianization which the White Robe was so quietly and yet so comprehensively pursuing with a faith higher than the stars and as unflinching as eternity, the Government had yielded to the Church's Commission of Indian Affairs in the choice of an executive. The Government reasoned that the Church possessed an immense vantage power in its position on the ground, its wise reading of men's hearts, its fairness, its divine fellowship, unhampered as was the Department of the Interior by prejudice, greed, the insistent clamor for the spoils of office, and the inefficiency which was the result of such a disregard of the eternal fitness of things. Locke Raynor had never seen the Missionary Bishop, but he had a high regard for Hugh Hunt, and Hugh Hunt spoke of the White Robe with a catch in his throat and eyes so full of prophecy that, for the time, they were dimmed to earth. He thought it likely the Missionary Bishop knew whom he was putting in worldly authority over his loved redskins. In the second place, he liked the Agent's big, good-natured face, placid except for those sudden gusts of passion which were so quickly spent. Surely it was a guileless face, else the Agent was a splendid masquerader. But there was yet another reason for his kinder judgment. More and more was he coming under the influence of the sweet personality of Katha-

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

rine Mendenhall. Thinking of her, he was glad anew that the opportunity had been vouchsafed him to vindicate his mistrust of the Dorseys.

It was not far to the receiving station. The Agent was already there as was also Mr. Warlick. Mr. Warlick, it seemed, had a comprehensive as well as an insatiable curiosity. A cattle inspector was also there, curt of speech, quick of manner, keen of eye, careless in dress. He was diametrically opposed to the special inspector in all these minor points of personality. Mr. Warlick was as clean and unruffled as if he had spent the morning at his toilet instead of in the saddle. Locke wondered resentfully if he had found the time for a bath.

"We have been waiting for you," said Warlick, with the hint of an edge to his voice.

"I am here," replied Locke, shortly.

A number of cattle were held in a bunch. They were presumably picked stock. A second instalment was held together farther down at the foot of a gently sloping ravine for reinforcement of the ranks. The Government had contracted for one hundred head of unblemished beeves. The man of the curt speech and quick manner — whose name was Lemuel Morton, but who was more familiarly known as Mort — stood near to check off the number and to pass upon the physical desirability or undesirability of these involuntary candidates for doubtful honors. Mr. Warlick hugged the vicinity of the Agent, occasionally indulging in a desultory conversation. It was still and very warm. Oppo-

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

site, the yellow bluffs were beetling. On this side, the slopes were more gentle. Here and there in the distance might be seen a small crawling procession of nomads migrating to the far places of their Reservation.

The cattle were driven past Lemuel Morton singly. The unchallenged ones went on to the temporary pasture, where they were allowed to wander and feed at will. Those rejected were taken in charge by a herder detailed for the purpose by the contractors, and driven on around the hill to feed in the valley beyond until such time, as the number being told to the satisfaction of all, those found wanting might be driven back to the ranges. Lemuel Morton seemed an impartial judge. Many a scabby, mangy, underfed creature was halted and sent on around the hill. When half the requisite number had been checked off, the cattle inspector suddenly frowned and puckered up his lips for a moment; then, "I passed on that steer before," he said crisply.

"You 're dreamin', Mort," said the contractors' representative, with a tolerant grin.

"Well, maybe I am, but don't do it again, Mr. Payne. Same blind eye, same old ribs stickin' up out of the same old black hide. Smooth game that, drivin' him clear around the hill and mixin' him up again with the main herd — but don't do it again."

"You 're right. There's no gettin' around you, Mort," responded the man called Payne, with a prodigious wink. Then his eye fell upon Warlick. "Only," he continued, "you 're dead wrong this time.

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

Made a little mistake for once. This is the first time —”

“Shut up, can’t you?” said Mort, tersely.
“You’re bothering me.”

“Yes, but I’d like for you to acknowledge that whereas there might be a middlin’ strong resemblance, you ain’t undertakin’ to say that he *is* the same.”

Mort paused a moment in his operations. He looked at Billy Payne. There was a cool contempt in the glance. Billy Payne returned the look with usury. His level glance carried a threat.

“No, I ain’t undertakin’ to say it,” said Mort, finally. “I have already said it and I will say it again if you ain’t satisfied. Don’t play to Mr. Warlick, Billy. More’n likely he would n’t appreciate it if you did.” He returned to his work with an upward lift of his carelessly clad shoulders.

“I appreciate this much,” put in the special inspector, with his usual stately manner, “that I have this day rescued the Government from the ignominy of constant deceit and double dealing on the part of its paid servants and those with whom said servants transact business. It was high time some one looked into the affairs of this Agency, and very much worth while.”

“What do you mean, sir?” cried Mort, wheeling suddenly and facing Mr. Warlick squarely.

“I mean,” said Warlick, deliberately, “that if I had not been here, it is highly probable that this disgraceful bag o’ bones would not have been halted a second time — if indeed it had been halted at all.”

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

A quick red came into Mort's brown cheeks. A quick retort was on his lips — and then he laughed instead.

"Now what do you think of that?" he said to Locke, still laughing. "Why, you funny little man!"

The counting continued.

"One hundred and *done*," cried Mort, when at last the roll was complete. He mopped his hot face with his handkerchief. "Mean job," he said to no one in particular.

Mr. Warlick stepped forward.

"One moment," he said. "I ask for a re-count."

"A what?" demanded Mort, in blunt astonishment.

"A re-count of the accepted cattle. I am far from sure that there are a hundred here. The agreement was for a full hundred, I believe. I ask for a re-counting."

"Well, ask away, but I'm blamed if you won't ask till you're blue in the face with frost before I count 'em again. I appeal to you, Major Mendenhall. Have I done my duty or not?"

"Why, I think so, Mort. I don't see why not. What makes you think there has been a mistake, Mr. Warlick? Raynor here checked them off after Mort let loose of them."

"It would be so easy for them to run around the little hill yonder," murmured Mr. Warlick, softly. "Why would n't it be as easy for the good ones as for the bad ones? Would you be willing to take your oath that none of the accepted cattle has been counted twice? I am not an expert accountant—in beefsteaks, I acknowledge; but I have been rather busy since the

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

second appearance of 'Yon lean and hungry Cassius' and I have not yet counted to one hundred, including the rejected ones. I think you had better have them numbered again, Major."

"Count 'em again, boys," said the Major.

Mort's face had become thoughtful. He again puckered his lips.

"Shall we, Major?" he asked, doubtfully. "It's pretty late. If everything is not all right, Mr. Payne will be glad to rectify it in the morning."

"Count 'em again!" roared the Major, his face purpling with wrath.

Billy Payne's countenance was a study.

"All right, Mr. Raynor, we 'll count 'em again," said Mort, gently.

And they did. The accepted beeves were rounded up into a compact herd while the rejected ones were driven some distance away and closely guarded, so that the two bunches could not become inadvertently mixed. No one had anything to say while Lemuel Morton and Locke Raynor made their second counting. All at once Warlick's self-important and spectacular declaration of doubt made such a scheme for fraud as he had outlined seem remarkably plausible.

When there were no more cattle to come, when, cut off by watchful herders from wandering around the hill and so hastened down the ravine by pressure from some interested by-stander, the accepted herd went to grazing peacefully where they stood, the counting rested at eighty-three.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

After supper that night, Major Mendenhall went to his office to wrestle alone with the multitudinous troubles that were already beginning to streak his dark hair and to make him wonder in all seriousness why he had so heartily desired this appointment to the Indian service. Here Mr. Warlick found him. The Major did not care to see Mr. Warlick particularly. His advent upon the Reservation had seemed a preconcerted signal for Pandora to open her box.

"And what do you think of your beloved issue clerk now?" began Mr. Warlick, abruptly for him. He refused to be seated and stood instead by the open window in order to appropriate, to the Major's loss, all he could of the slight coolness which crept through it with the going down of the sun.

"Nothing has happened so far as I can see, to change my previous estimation," responded the Major, fanning himself with suggestive vigor with his hat. Mr. Warlick did not take the hint. He even moved closer to the window.

"You do not connect him in any way, then, with that affair of this afternoon?"

"I certainly do not," replied the Major, loyally, if wearily.

"Have you any idea who this Locke Raynor is?"

"He is just Locke Raynor, I reckon. A nice sort of young fellow who suits me mighty well. Understands the art of minding his own business to a t-y-ty. I don't think there's anything mysterious about him at all."

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

The special inspector leaned forward slightly and lowered his voice.

"Did it ever occur to you, Major, that he might be a spy?"

Major Mendenhall's big blue eyes opened wide in unfeigned amazement.

"A spy! Why, what kind of spy would he be — and whose spying would he do — and what would he be spying for?" he blurted out, wonderingly.

Warlick shrugged his shoulders and balanced himself on his neatly shod toes, coming down to earth again on his heels before answering.

"I'm sure I don't know. I thought perhaps you might have your suspicions — that is all."

"Did you know Locke Raynor before you came out here?" asked the Major, shrewdly.

"No, I never knew — Locke Raynor before I came out here," replied Warlick, impassively.

"Well, the Department sends you out to look over the grounds," said the Major, plainly relieved at the answer, "and I don't think it would stoop to send a secret spy in addition. One's enough for me," he added, under his breath. Aloud, he continued, "As for the rest, I can't see that Locke Raynor holds a position of sufficient standing to be in any way dangerous to any one's interests, public or private. I can certainly deal with my own clerks. If he connived in any way with Billy Payne — which I candidly confess I do not believe — to defraud the Government by wittingly counting those wretched

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

cattle twice, I can call him to account without assistance from any one, if you please."

"It strikes me that this Raynor is too smart, far too smart — or thinks he is which amounts to the same thing — to be contented with this clerkship. I am always suspicious of erudition out of its place. You don't happen to think of any other interests he might be serving, do you, other than those of the Government?"

"I certainly do not!" snapped the Major, now thoroughly angry.

"And you are firmly convinced that he was innocent of any wrong in that transaction of this afternoon?"

"I am."

The Major was on the rack and showed it, but his inquisitor quizzed on unmercifully.

"On whom do you lay the blame?"

"Why, on Billy Payne, I reckon, though I always supposed his word was good before. He said he thought his herders drove up fresh instalments from a bunch down toward the river with which we finally filled out the number, you remember."

"The deception would profit the cowboys nothing unless Billy Payne were cognizant of it. Neither would it profit Billy Payne if the contractors were not wise to it — unless he were indeed smooth enough to make a get-away with the shorts to green pastures of his own. Who are the contractors, Major?"

"Asher Newman, the post trader," said the Agent, unwillingly.

"Served in the army, did n't he?"

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

"Four years," said the Agent, simply.

"Did you ever fall short before?"

"Once or twice when it came time to issue them. We thought some had strayed away. Our facilities for pasturage here are not first class. We never missed any at receiving time."

"And you still hold Locke Raynor guiltless?"

"I do."

"Then it lies between you and your friend, the post trader," said Special Inspector Warlick, softly.

"Sir!" cried the Major, springing from his chair, his eyes blazing. He was fairly choking with rage. "Do you dare accuse me — me — I say, do you dare call me a thief? Answer me or I'll break every bone in your sleek body! Am I thief? Answer me, I say, answer me!"

"Dear me, I am perfectly willing to answer you," deprecated Mr. Warlick. "Only give me time. There are a great many people in the world who do not place a little easy grafting from the Government in the same category with thievery. However much you and I might differ on such a proposition, I am fair enough to see how even an honest man — sometimes —" he stopped, quailing a little under the blaze of the blue eyes confronting him.

"Go on!" choked the Major.

"Therefore," proceeded the inspector, shifting his ground a little, "I can easily see how your friend, the trader, might fall into the error of not being particularly punctilious in the buying of cattle to meet his

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

contract. The lame, the halt and the blind — and the bony —” he added, relapsing into misplaced facetiousness, “anything and everything that could hobble down to the receiving station on three legs and a half, or four, as the case might be, and had a tatter of skin left to cover its ribs, went in. It was all right. No one was hurt. The Government was a sort of an abstract proposition, any way. No one asked any questions. Anything was good enough for a dirty Injun. Somebody high in authority had a winking eye — somebody, mark you — or such a thing could not be brought to a successful culmination.”

“If you breathe one word more or if you fail to retract what you have already said about my friend, I’ll — I’ll — I’ll *kill* you, Mr. Warlick!” cried Major Mendenhall, pale with a purpose which seemed terribly real just then. “If you meant just now that because he was in the war, the post trader argued that the country owed him any little thing he might be able to pick up that way on the side, you lie!” His tense voice softened. “It is not those who have fought their country’s battles who ask anything of it or who stoop to barter away its trust. The smell of powder — and lo, one’s country is sacred forevermore. It is we who stay at home, no matter for what reason, who sometimes forget. You and I, Mr. Warlick, are of those who might sometimes forget — but Asher Newman *never*!”

He sat down after this outburst and resumed his fanning. If the inspector was non-plussed for the moment, it was not for long.

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

"Why don't you discharge Locke Raynor?" he asked after awhile, airily. "He is nothing to you, as you say, but a clerk. Somebody has made a mistake. It is not Major Mendenhall. It is not the post trader. Who then?"

"To hell with you and Locke Raynor and the whole world for that matter!" cried the Major, thoroughly exasperated. "You are right. What do I care for Locke Raynor or any one in comparison to a man like Asher Newman? If by discharging Locke Raynor, I can get a trifle of rest from your importunity — I speak frankly, Mr. Warlick — he is discharged. I do not know who was at fault this afternoon. No matter. It is ended. The position of issue clerk of this Agency will be declared vacant in the morning. The game is not worth the candle. Clerks are plenty — I hope. Good-night."

Returning from an early plunge into the cold water of the Missouri, glowing from the vigorous friction with the swift and tumbling current, Locke encountered Katharine Mendenhall strolling riverwards. They met with an odd constraint. She was hatless and lovely. There was no wind to ruffle her soft, shining hair. Her face with its clear tan and soft oval outlines was reserved and thoughtful. It was so early that the Agency with its sloping plain was still shrouded in the cool shadow of the eastern hills, which the sun ascending had not yet surmounted. One might have judged it delinquent and not yet arisen had it not been for the sunlit hills across the river, whose loftier and more distant

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

summits were already bathed in a flood of molten gold which slowly but steadily creeping downward, lapped up searing grass, ugly gumbo stain, and harsh bunch of soap-weed, washed them all in warm yellow, and left them on the hillside while it pursued its Midas course down into the wide valley.

"I thought I was the only creature who slept within the walls stirring," said Katharine, tentatively. "I wanted to think something out which accounts for the earliness of my hour."

"If this is one of your first experiences in getting up early in this country, you have missed much," responded Locke. "The mornings are sublime. The morning we rode to Brule, for instance — have you forgotten already? The days are too hot. One lives only from four until eight A. M. After that, one merely exists. Then get up, I say, and live."

"Every single morning?" she asked, doubtfully.

"Every single morning," he declared, emphatically.

"It is lovely now," she said.

"Too lovely to last," he agreed, with a peculiar intonation that caught her attention.

"Oh, then you have already heard?" she asked.

"Mr. Warlick told me last night. He seemed quite elated over it. He is extremely zealous in his country's service, is n't he? If he occasionally picks on the wrong man, why should we squirm? Why not pat him on the back, instead, for his zeal in a good cause? There are plenty of grafters in the Indian service. Why dis-

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

criminate? Kick out somebody. It will sound well at Washington," he concluded, ironically.

"You are very bitter," she said, simply. "I do not blame you. I am very sorry."

"I am bitter only because — well, because my friend, Special Inspector Warlick, is such a calf," he ended, lamely. "I don't want to go. I don't mind confessing that. In truth, I have some excellent reasons for wanting to stay. I had something at stake, for one thing, and I had something to prove. But because a graceless scamp of a cowboy thought to enrich himself at the expense of the Government, why, I have to go."

"Mr. Raynor, why don't you tell my father your reasons for wanting to stay? Why don't you tell him who you are? I made him tell me all about it last night as he was going fuming to bed. He said he could n't help it — there must be something wrong or Mr. Warlick would n't be so possessed to get rid of you. Did you know Mr. Warlick before you came here? Why don't you tell my father — or let me?"

"You must not tell your father anything, Miss Mendenhall. You must remember that — not anything."

"But why?"

"Mr. Warlick just now is in favor with the Department. The Department has been finally aroused to the fact that the traders and agents — some traders and agents and other employees — are systematically and egregiously cheating the Government and robbing the poor Injun. Your Missionary Bishop was one of the

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

first to sound the slogan which made the Department jump in its sleep. It was your Missionary Bishop who asked for Major Mendenhall's appointment. I don't think Mr. Warlick is particularly enamored of the Missionary Bishop and he is over-zealous to find delinquents. He was so glad over my discharge that he could not wait for my chief to deliver it. He must needs speak the word himself. Don't you see, Miss Mendenhall? He is bound to dismiss somebody. If your father insisted upon my retention, it would only result in both of us being sent beyond the border."

"Better both in all fairness than one for another's temporary benefit," persisted Katharine, stubbornly.

"Would you like to go back — beyond the border?" he asked, a hint of eagerness in his voice.

"I?" The question seemed to startle her. "I go back? Why, I don't know. If my father goes back, I suppose of course — why, would I go back, too?" She seemed pondering the question in her own mind. She lifted her eyes to the opposite hills, now sun-lit to their very base. "Would I? I never thought of that," she said, wonderingly.

"Of course you would," he returned, sharply. "What could there be for you here with your people gone?"

"Not much — for me," she assented, simply. She had found the answer to her question somewhere — somewhere beyond the ken of the man, the bitterest moment of whose discharge was now — perhaps from the new and radiant light which suddenly flashed over

ASKS FOR A RE-COUNT

all the hills and the valley and the river as the sun leaped lightly and dazzlingly, at last, into full sight on the eastern hill-tops. "Perhaps for someone else there will be something. I trust so. I could not go back with my father now because I have promised Mr. Hunt to teach in the mission school this Winter. He said to make White Flower and the others like me. Oh, God grant that through men like the White Robe and Hugh Hunt they may be far, far better and wiser than I!"

Locke Raynor bowed his head for a moment. He felt old and world-stained and unworthy and he could not bear the rapt exaltation of the girl's mood, then, when he had failed and must go away.

"Good-morning!"

Locke looked up with a start. One of the lesser employees had approached the river bank unseen by either Locke or Katharine.

"Well?" said Locke, in surprise.

"They have been looking for you up at the Agency. You are to report at once. I think you are to be sent to Yankton to-day on important business."

"You are mistaken, I think," said Locke, relapsing into his old slow way of speech. "I am not subject to Special Inspector Warlick's orders. It is for me to say when I shall start to Yankton or to the Styx either, for that matter. Tell him from me that I still take my commands from Major Mendenhall — only."

"But it's the old man himself who is sending you," said the young fellow, grinning. "He's been looking

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

for you everywhere and swearing some, too, because you could n't be located. There's something special on, I reckon, because I heard him say, 'That settles it. I can't spare Raynor until after this is satisfactorily disposed of, any way. Raynor must go to Yankton.' So you'd better do a little sprintin' for he's in a tearing hurry and likewise in a towering rage because you can't be found."

He turned and sauntered leisurely away after delivering his message, regardless of the fact that the Major was impatiently awaiting his return. Even in that early day few people were ever in a hurry on the Reservation.

"And so you are going to be here, after all," exclaimed Katharine, with a smile.

"I am always going to be where you are if I can," said Locke, quite simply.

Together, they returned to the Agency.

CHAPTER XII

THE WOOING OF THE WHITE FLOWER

WEAK and listless but free from fever, White Flower half reclined upon a buffalo robe near the opening of her father's tribal-marked lodge. Occasionally, stirred by an ambition that fluctuated as her small store of strength rose with rest or fell with fatigue, she bent over an intricate pattern which she was weaving in parti-colored beads, procured for her at the trading store of Asher Newman by Black Tomahawk. More often, her hands lay idle in her lap, while her moody eyes dwelt darkly upon unseen things. The medicine pouch was destined for Yellow Owl, and she was fashioning it thus elaborately at the instigation of her father, who desired thus royally, as befitted a chief, to show his gratitude for the recovery of a princess of the Yanktonais. White Flower's mother had not dared tell her proud liege and master that she had deceived him and that the white man's medicine had wrought the marvellous healing of their last and only living child. White Flower herself had been too ill to realize what her mother had done; and as for Yellow Owl, he bided his time. Thus it was that the simple,

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

aboriginal, tradition-loving heart of Black Tomahawk went out in renewed faith to the great magician of souls and bodies, and gladly did him honor. The great majority of the tribe had scattered for the Summer's hunting, and Yellow Owl had followed the wanderers; but Black Tomahawk's lodge remained unfolded where his Winter camp had been, because White Flower was not yet strong enough for a long journey, and White Flower was very dear indeed to the heart of the Chief. But Black Tomahawk himself was temporarily absent from the tipi.

White Flower's mother came out and seated herself on the extreme edge of the robe. She also began industriously to weave, while she cast surreptitious glances at her languid daughter.

"What are you making?" asked White Flower, uninterestedly, her eyes still upon things unseen.

"A necklace," said Smoke Woman, quietly, and then she began to chatter volubly, and, it would seem, unendingly, her broad, plain, heavy face redeemed from positive ugliness by the animation in her expressive black eyes. She talked of the day's work and of the lonesomeness in the lodge with Black Tomahawk away, and more than all, of the lonesomeness of the deserted village, with all their people gone. She spoke frankly and admiringly of Yellow Owl's wonderful medicine, and gazed adoringly upon White Flower's averted face. She longed for the time to come when White Flower would be strong to travel the way of all true Dakotas in the Summer time—the way of

WOONG OF WHITE FLOWER

the wilderness. Black Tomahawk's horses were strong and fast. They would overtake the loiterers. They would camp by a stream whose waters flowed clear and strong from some hidden spring, and here White Flower would grow so strong and well that she would never more need the ministrations of a medicine man. Halcyon days she pictured, and then slyly she fell to mimicking the ways of the Agency women, oftentimes laughing outright in pleased appreciation of her own cleverness. It would have been difficult indeed for Katharine Mendenhall to recognize in this contented, smiling, well-dressed Indian woman, the jaded, taciturn, dust-stained, hopeless-eyed squaw who had sought her out that day at the Agency in the desperation that defied alike custom, authority, and the dread superstition which, in that day, held the Indian frantically aloof from the white doctor and his medicine.

White Flower did not interrupt. She allowed her mother the full monopoly of speech. But when at last Smoke Woman paused for very lack of breath, the girl asked quietly, just as if nothing had been said between her first question and now:

“Who for?”

Smoke Woman bent lower over her weaving. Her coarse black hair shrouded her face. While she was bending thus, silent, the ancient grandmother came out of the tipi where she had been taking an afternoon nap. Her single-piece garment of buckskin was short, and her decorated leggins strapped around her thin legs gave her much the appearance of an old man. Her

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

piercing eyes were fixed upon her daughter-in-law. She leaned tottering upon a walking stick.

"I heard," she announced, grimly, "and I, too, ask, 'Who for?'"

Smoke Woman glanced imploringly at White Flower. She could read no sympathy nor understanding there; and there was no need to look to the old woman for the least gleam of comfort. She was more impossible even than White Flower. There was no help for her. Verily the women of her race were more bitter against white interference than were the men.

"I am making a pretty necklace for the child of Tahu Tanka," she said. "Our people call her Sun-in-the-hair because her hair is as yellow as the sun."

She was a wise woman, was Black Tomahawk's wife, and before either her mother-in-law or her daughter could voice their displeasure, she continued, adroitly:

"Black Tomahawk takes gifts to Tahu Tanka because he is good to our people, and because he seeks to win the favor of the Great Father at Washington, who gives to Tahu Tanka the flour and the bacon and the sugar and the coffee to give to us so that we do not go hungry. I make a gift for Tahu Tanka's child because I, too, would win the favor of Tahu Tanka so that the Great Father will be generous and give us many things. The Great Father listens to the talk of Tahu Tanka. That is what Black Tomahawk says and it is so."

"Umph!" ejaculated the grandmother, sharply. "If I were a man I would starve before I would eat out

WOOING OF WHITE FLOWER

of the white man's hand like a dog. I hate that long white thin thing that steals into our homes without the politeness of waiting to be invited. I hate her!"

"And why should you seek to win the favor of those who are doling out to us what is already our own?" asked White Flower, gloomily. "They owe it to us. It is pay for our lands. They have to do it. It is little enough at best. We will not beg for it. We will fight for it. If they forget to give us what is ours, let them look out. My father is living in peace at the Agency but he does not feel peace. He will be very glad of an excuse."

She laid her work aside and rose to her feet, slowly, gathering up a gay blanket that had fallen from her shoulders and steadying herself by the lodge wall. She was a slim, graceful creature, light on her feet and as untrammelled as a bird of the air; for, being the daughter of a once powerful and hereditary chief, she could not become a burden bearer until she had left her father's house for the lodge of some man who would bid for and buy her some day. Some day. When? He would be a brave, high in the councils of the tribe, because her father was, perhaps, the most influential man on the Yanktonais reserve, and he would see to that part of her marriage venture. But must he necessarily be of her own band? And standing thus dreamily, White Flower thought of the handsome Mad Wolf, who was very far away and had doubtless before this joined those hostiles who had so resolutely, and from the beginning, refused an ignominious sub-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

mission and a shameful tendering of their inalienable rights to the arrogant and unjustifiable demands of their enemies. Mad Wolf's heart was right. He was a brave of whom his women might well be proud. He had shaken off cowardly subservience to the invaders and had placed himself where all self-respecting Dakotas should be—in the van of that army which was being secretly recruited and organized—in the beginning of an organization vast, far-reaching, complete, faultless, and centralized. It would make the petulant military in the posts up and down the river, who were used to fighting the turbulent Tetons in scattered bands under temporary leaders, start aghast—could they but know. Her brothers would have been there had they lived. But before Mad Wolf lost himself in the hostile country, he had stolen in the dead of night to the lodge of Yellow Owl. He had had much to say, for though Mad Wolf was a wild, though supposedly friendly, Brule, and Yellow Owl was a peaceful Yanktonais, there was a fearful kinship of soul in the purposes of each, and Mad Wolf had need of the wise jossakeed. A portion of Mad Wolf's communications Yellow Owl had imparted to White Flower before he betook himself to the wilderness with his as yet unspoken determination to put himself at the head of a war party—a great and acknowledged war chief. It was because of what Yellow Owl had told her that the girl smiled and tossed her pretty head, while the grandmother nodded at her, approvingly, and her mother silently adored. But she had forgotten Mad Wolf when presently the smile

WOOING OF WHITE FLOWER

vanished and a mist veiled her eyes. She stepped forward.

"Where are you going?" questioned Smoke Woman, in anxious solicitude. "You are not yet strong enough to walk far. I will go for you."

"I think I shall walk to the creek. It is so hot here. The shade over there looks very pleasant. Perhaps I shall bathe. The water is so very cool and I ache with tiredness."

"I will go with you," said Smoke Woman.

"I like best to be alone to-day," said White Flower, with the imperiousness of a princess, and yet with the sting of the autocratic utterance extracted because of the tender little filial smile that accompanied it. Smoke Woman submitted without further word and bent once more to her threading and weaving.

It was not far to the stream. Black Tomahawk had an unerring eye for a good camp ground. It was late afternoon and extremely warm. The heat shimmered over the parched prairie. The cool green of the timber that bound itself so immutably to the course of the stream was indeed an alluring prospect. Short as the distance was, however, White Flower was tired when she had descended the slope which hid from her sight the lodge that alone remained of all her father's people. The effort of removing her garments seemed far too great for her fever-wasted strength, after the exertion of walking; so she stood hesitatingly on the brink of the clear, gravel-bottomed creek, glad of the protection from the fierce glare of the July sun,

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

and wondering many things that were born of the Summer and youth and were touched with the quaint phantasies of Yellow Owl's imageries. And more than all, as is the way of all maids but more especially of an Indian maid, she wondered which one of the many brave young men of her own tribe — or of another — would find favor with Black Tomahawk and with her.

She had the quickness of hearing peculiar to her race, but so absorbed was she in her day-dreaming that she failed to catch the light gliding fall of moccasined feet. She was startled almost to the point of screaming out in terror when she felt a presence too late to escape from it, and when the soft restful light of the shaded spot was suddenly and altogether blotted from her vision by a muffling blanket, which made wholly ineffectual her low gasp of frightened protest. For she became conscious that underneath the blanket a grip of iron firmness imprisoned her close, oh, very close, indeed, to a man's side.

“Do not struggle, little White Flower, it is I, your lover, who hold you thus in my blanket,” crooned a low, soft voice in her ear. “It is thus I will hold you safe forever. It is thus I will keep what is mine. Cease your struggling, little one. As my warrior blanket now covers us both, so my lodge will cover us both soon. My lodge is empty, little White Flower. It waits for you. How long before you will make it glad, dear one, how long? Let it be soon. It is all empty and dark and very lonely. Ah, little White Flower, I am very strong and you are very weak. It

WOOING OF WHITE FLOWER

is not well to struggle. You are very tired. Be still. I will not let you go. You are mine. I have caught you in my blanket. I have won my bride away from all men. Running Bird's lodge sings for joy!"

Realizing the utter futility of further physical struggle against the embrace of her self-avowed lover, White Flower finally lay spent and still against his supporting arm. But in her eyes sparkled a mutinous gleam. She threw up her proud head so that the blanket fell away from her face and Running Bird's lean, fine countenance lighted swiftly in keen appreciation of her fragile loveliness.

"Am I the daughter of a low caste tribesman, that I must be wooed so rudely?" she demanded with much dignity, despite the handicap of her position. "Wa-hcá-ska is not so easily won. Or am I daughter of the silly whites, to be won by pretty talk?"

How could Running Bird know that her heart was fluttering so frantically not because of resentment but because of a great joy in the acknowledged love of this fine, brave, lovable son of a fine, brave, lovable leader of men; and because, too, of a girlish pride in her handsome lover's superb strength and winning impulsiveness, aye, and in the primitive rudeness of his passionate claiming of his mate? But though he did not know this, he was too much in earnest to be daunted by her repulse. He could not imagine his lodge without Wa-hcá-ska.

"I bring my love to you first," he said, simply, "because I do not want to buy my wife against her will;

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

and because you are a child of a chief of the Yanktonais and the idol of his heart, you may choose whom you will wed. As for the 'pretty talk,' I speak from my heart, Wa-hcá-ska."

"You have learned many things from your white friends," said White Flower, with sly malice. "Why do you not choose your bride from among these new friends? Your white brother will help you. He does not like Wa-hcá-ska because she hates them all—all the white people; and I laugh at his gods—they are such silly things; and I hate them because they are so cruel to the Dakotas; and I pray every day to the gods of our fathers to rise up and smite them, so that we may be free again. Your white brother hates me for this. He knows. He will get you a wife from among his people so that you will altogether forsake the ways of your own nation."

"The Slender Ash likes best that I should wed one of my own people," retorted Running Bird, sternly. "Indian women many times marry outside our race. It is not often a brave takes a white woman to his lodge. Come to me, little White Flower," he pleaded, looking down from his straight, slim height to her face turned coquettishly away from his arm, so that he could not see the quick response to his plea in her luminous eyes. Taking advantage of a momentary loosening of his grasp, White Flower sprang away from him, dexterously leaping clear of the enveloping blanket as she did so. Her silvery laugh rang out so that up beyond

WOOING OF WHITE FLOWER

the sloping bank her kinswomen smiled in happy sympathy.

"Stay where you are, big strong man," she cried, gleefully, "or I will run. And if I am first to my mother, I will remain in my father's lodge forever and I know a Brule lodge that will be empty for many a moon. You know Wa-hcá-ska for a swift runner."

Running Bird folded his longing arms, smilingly, and stepped back.

"It is but a few sleeps since I danced in the great sun dance and did not faint, but kept dancing until the sun went down, because I was glad that a little White Flower had not withered. That place of the dance was very far away. My young men besought me to go into camp by some cool stream and recover of my wounds. Many friends in the wild camps offered me hospitality in their lodges. But I knew where a White Flower grew and I could not wait. I wanted that flower for my own. I did not want any one else to gather it. So I came. Many miles my feet have run. They are very tired. I find my White Flower fresh and sweet, waiting for me. I faint by the wayside. I cannot take another step, even though my little White Flower is just over the way. I reach for her but she sways just beyond my reach. My heart weeps. What shall I do? I try to walk. I cannot. In despair, I hold out my arms again, and this time my little White Flower sways this way." Running Bird opened wide his arms as he spoke and the lovelight in his eyes drew

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

White Flower like a magnet slowly, slowly, nearer and nearer the danger line. He knew it would be but child's play for him to catch her if she elected to run for her freedom; but how glorious if she would come to him now of her own free will! Barely on the safe side of the line, White Flower stopped.

"I hate the man you call The Slender Ash," she said, straightforwardly.

"I am sorry," said Running Bird, simply.

"Will you hate him, too?"

"He is my white brother," said Running Bird, with quiet finality.

"I hate Sun-in-the-hair," said White Flower."

"I am sorry."

"Will you hate her, too?"

"She made Wa-hcá-ska well. I cannot hate her for that."

"I do not understand!" cried White Flower, in bewildered alarm. "How made Wa-hcá-ska well?"

"When you were sick of the fever and Yellow Owl's conjurations were unavailing, it was Sun-in-the-hair's medicine that drove away the evil spirit."

"How do you know?" demanded White Flower, in quick resentment. "She had no right. She has poisoned me. Is that why my mother makes for her a necklace? She shall not. I will not take her medicine. It is bewitched. She has poisoned me. I shall die!"

There was real dread in White Flower's trembling voice. Running Bird tried to soothe her. He told her that she would have died as surely as the sun shone

WOOING OF WHITE FLOWER

if it had not been for her called Sun-in-the-hair. He knew it. Her mother knew it. Yellow Owl knew it but was too selfish and cowardly to admit it. His white brother knew it. Let her ask him. He would tell her. Even if she did hate him, she knew he would speak the truth. When she was reasonably calm again, she said bitterly:

"I hate her, anyway, because she had not the right. I hate the white man's gods. Will you hate them, too?"

That quick, moved look of sadness again fell over Running Bird's face.

"Not the Man Who was nailed to the cross," he said, in a low voice. "I cannot hate the young Man Who died on the cross. He — did not cry out. All the rest I will hate for your sake, Wa-hcá-ska, but Him I cannot. He — did not cry out."

Hope was dying in the Indian girl's Indian heart — and she had been so sure — so sure. But because she loved him only less than her sacred Indian ideals, she made one last desperate attempt to win him.

"If there should be a war, Running Bird, a real war between our people and — our enemies, would you fight on the side The Slender Ash fights on?"

"The Slender Ash does not go on the war-path. He preaches a peace that shall be unending for all peoples. But I shall not fight on the side the white warriors fight on. Did you think I would go to war against my own people?"

A wave of joyous relief swept over the girl's face. She took an involuntary step toward him.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"And you will lead your young men to war?" she cried, breathlessly.

Running Bird was in sore straits. How he loved this proud, scornful beauty with the Indian heart! How her passionate hatred of the new ways and all connected with them stirred anew his own deep-seated loyalty to the Alliance of Friends! Not only to the Tetons, the first to occupy this fair buffalo land, with their subsequent seven subdivisions; but to all the rest of that mighty Alliance which once loved and fought and hunted and lorded it over all the country around their home villages at Mille Lacs, who had gradually, band by band, followed the daring lead of the Tetons and migrated to the gameful prairies — first the Yanktons, and the Yanktonais, Wa-hcá-ska's ancestors — and lastly the four bands of the Santees. He could ask no fairer heaven than that all that once proud Alliance be allowed to love and fight and hunt and lord it over this vast Missouri region, as his ancestors and Wa-hcá-ska's had ruled that other land, when their *habitat* was the woods of the northern Mississippi. But he knew that it was not to be. So that though his heart might break for the broken pride of the Allied Friends, as long as the Government to which The Slender Ash gave allegiance kept faith and left them in undisturbed possession of that portion of their birthright which had been pledged to them inviolate forever by sacred treaty after a great council, so long he would never take up arms against that Government. Thus his race would escape total extinction, might indulge in a fair degree

WOOING OF WHITE FLOWER

its nomadic propensities, and could enjoy to the fullest extent its old-time independence and passionately loved freedom. If in time it came to accept the white-man's gods and some of his ways, it would not be because they were forced upon them. And might it not only serve to make them the wiser and the stronger, so that his nation would not be the less Indian but, perhaps, as mighty and as many as the white race? The Great Father had approached dangerously near a breach of faith when, in direct violation of the plain terms of the treaty which forbade the trespassing of any white persons upon their preserves, Custer had been sent on a non-understood occupation of their cherished Black Hills. But Hugh Hunt had said the Great Father would keep faith. The Slender Ash always spoke the truth. He had said only cowards lied. He had said, "Wait a little and you will understand." Perhaps it was that the White Robe had some *wakan* power that would keep the white man from their treasure chest. Any way, he trusted The Slender 'Ash. He would wait a little to understand.

Something of all this crowded through Running Bird's brain as he weighed what answer he should make Wa-hcá-ska. He could not make her understand. Not now. The women stayed close to the lodges. They could not see things as they were, as the men could. But he thought that if Wa-hcá-ska did not come to his lodge he could not bear it. He did not know how he could live without Wa-hcá-ska. He was sorely tried.

"As long as my white brother's people keep faith, I cannot fight," he said, at last, sadly.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"The daughter of Black Tomahawk wants a man in her lodge, not a coward!" cried White Flower, violently.

After all, she took him by surprise. He was trying so hard to think of some word that would win her without denying his white brother whom he had so learned to love on the Laramie Trail. Quick as a flash, weakness forgotten, her fleet feet seeming scarcely to touch the ground, she bounded up the embankment and was off over the prairie like the wind; while from the women in front of the tipi came an excited clapping of hands and shrill cries of encouragement to the flying girl. They thought it was all a part of the game, and though they cheered for Wa-hcá-ska they thought Running Bird would surely overtake her, and they hoped that it would be so, because they thought that in her heart Wa-hcá-ska wanted it to be so, too.

A moment Running Bird hesitated; then he, too, bounded up the slope. He caught her just as she was about to throw herself through the entrance to the tipi. Her kinswomen had scattered to give her right of way. Their faces shone with pleased excitement.

"I shall never give you up," whispered Running Bird, passionately. "I have caught you again on your own dare and you are mine. Turn your face to me, little White Flower. I love you. Turn your face to me."

White Flower was panting with weakness. She trembled so that she could scarcely stand. Indeed, she would have fallen but for Running Bird's hungry arms. But she strained from him and turned her face away.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STRANGER WHO CAME AND WENT SILENTLY

WHILE in Yankton, Locke put up at the new Merchants' Hotel. It was an imposing looking structure for that early day, when little more than a decade had passed since the Great Outbreak had driven those first hardy settlers panic-stricken into the welcoming and welcomed shelter of the mother city's hastily reared but effective stockade walls. Built of plain red brick, square of outline, and unadorned save by a narrow balcony leading out from an upper hallway, it fronted what was then the main street of the interesting little town, with an air both of assured prosperity and of substantial hospitality.

There sat with Locke one evening at supper a young fellow with a ready smile, but of speech not so ready. Their table was close to a sunny south window which faced the quiet by-street. A languid breeze, heavy with odors from the mid-summer garden of a pretty cottage across the way, faintly stirred the muslin curtains. Perhaps it came as a breath of home to both men. Certain it is that the pleasant shade trees and the sweet Summer flower gardens which belonged to him who had been one of the Territory's pioneer governors, together with glimpses of like flower oases, loved and nourished

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

by others of those first families, brought to Locke Raynor a feeling of rest and quiet after strife — the calm and repose that follow in the wake of the old established order of things.

Locke was not much of a talker himself. He usually considered it far too much trouble to exert himself to entertain chance acquaintances, who almost without exception would prove themselves totally uninteresting, and who, running their own races, tragically intent upon not losing themselves in the network of the world's tracks, would in all likelihood never cross his path again. It seemed such a wanton waste of nerve force to babble inanities to strangers. However, at those occasional times when he took the trouble to be strictly frank with himself, he always acknowledged that his indisposition to be drawn into the free passing back and forth of speech which prevails wherever men meet together, centred in pure mind-laziness. But he liked the young fellow with the ready smile, the young down on the upper lip, and with the straight back of the regular army, so that he forgot to pamper his indolence; and besides, the breath of the Summer garden touching him like the memory of a caress, awakened an old need of companionship — a need so ancient in its origin that its insistent longing brought forth Eve, and so universally essential in its God-made law that men who, in the pride of their egoism, withdraw themselves from the sinning, striving world, undergo soul suicide. Because of this spontaneous liking, he asked the boyish lieutenant of cavalry whither he fared.

THE SILENT STRANGER

"West," said the stranger, with his genial smile.

"To some of the up-river forts, doubtless," said Locke, indifferent to the real destination, and only desiring that for a little while he might have friendly converse with this likable young fellow who sat opposite him. Perhaps the desire for companionship would wane with the waning of the odor of those flowers over there; but even so, he need not then follow his new acquaintance to the lobby for an after-dinner cigar. Business was always an excusable pretext.

"Perhaps," said the stranger.

There was a pause during which the young officer placidly ate a juicy steak and Locke watched him covertly and curiously.

"My name is Locke Raynor," he said, suddenly and easily. "I am returning to Big Bend Agency to-morrow. I am employed there in a minor capacity. It is Agency business that called me to Yankton. If you happen to be faring my way, I shall be glad of your company. I heard you asking for a horse; so I judge that you, like me, intend taking the trail by land rather than by sea."

"Yes, and still west," responded the stranger, glancing up a moment to smile radiantly. "My name is Brian Levering."

"Oh," said Locke, and desisted in his efforts toward establishing a friendly basis of communication. But he went with him to the smoker, nevertheless, and it was over their cigars that the stranger confessed that he was really going Locke's way, and that he was much

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

pleased with the prospect of company for such a considerable slice of his long and tedious journey overland. Then he said good-night buoyantly and went upstairs to bed.

Night was near when they arrived at the old road-house. Here their trail was to divide, for Locke had determined to rest here for the night and possibly to employ the time in doing a little private detective work. The house had not long remained tenantless. He had an irresistible desire to make some personal observations of the workings of the new ownership. The young lieutenant could not wait. He had still two good hours before dark. He might even ride all night—if his horse held out. He was exceedingly anxious to get to Fort Lincoln at the earliest possible date. Yes, he would bide long enough for a bite of supper and that was all.

Their supper of tinned stuff and black coffee disposed of, the late companions set off together. Locke accompanied the despatch-bearer perhaps a mile upon his new and thenceforward lonely way, and then prepared to return. Brian Levering said good-night cheerily, turned to the north again, and rode quietly forward. Locke watched him a moment, the low sun glinting on his rifle barrel, until a dip in the broken trail hid him from view. Brian Levering never once looked back. He rode steadily forward, his young face ever to the north. With an unaccountable feeling of something that was deeper than lonesomeness, Locke rode slowly back to the road-house. A short three days had they

THE SILENT STRANGER

been comrades. "And after that the dark." He cared for his horse, went again into the house, and enquired if he might have a corner of the floor for a bed. The new keeper, a quiet, methodical man past middle age, assented to the request without parley and Locke spread his saddle blanket on the floor with his saddle for a pillow, and tired out from his days of riding, soon fell asleep.

He was awakened some time in the night by the loud slamming of a door and the sound of a man stumbling about in the dark, cursing with vigor and calling upon the keeper of the house to get up and strike a light and give him something to eat. He lay still, wondering who travelled so late and hoping the noise and confusion would n't last through the night but would subside soon so that he once more might sink his drowsy senses in that pleasing sleep which was too deep for dreams and too essential to take kindly to disturbance. He could hear the old keeper shuffling out of his bed in an adjoining room and imagined that he was making some special effort at haste as if that mouthy midnight prowler might prove to be a guest of distinction after all. Probably the highly colored insistence of the newcomer's demands carried convincing proof that at any rate he meant to have the old man's attendance and that right soon, *willy nilly*. Compliance in either case being the better part of valor, the keeper was soon in the room and had lighted a lantern, the dull gleam through the cloudy glass of which disclosed a scantiness of apparel that told the tale of the unwonted haste. It also disclosed something of

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

far more import to Locke than old Bob Bent's laughable appearance. The traveller was Peter Dorsey.

No sooner had the dim light flared out than Peter glowered through the murky gloom to ascertain if any others were before him and, if so, who such wayfarers might be. The shadowy figure in the corner pillowed on a saddle attracted his attention immediately and he swaggered over insolently to see for himself who else had sought shelter under old Bob's roof that night.

"It is just as well," thought Locke, "that my friend Peter does n't know that I know that he has come back." Aloud, he muttered drowsily to the peering face, "What on earth are you making such an infernal racket about? Can't you let a fellow sleep a little? I'm dead tired," and turned over on his saddle with his face to the wall. But underneath his drooping lids in the half light, he saw a look of quick recognition pass over the countenance of Peter, followed by an expression of such concentrated hate that as if in panoramic review, Locke saw again a rickety wagon with its three inmates beginning its slow climb to the uplands, saw the twilight gathering in the valley adding intensity to Peter's last long gaze of bitter enmity, and saw again Running Bird's calm face as he glided silently back into the young timber of American Creek. He would not have been greatly surprised to feel the cold touch of a steel blade searching for his spot of life, or to see a sudden bright flash of struck powder before the great dark came. He had an almost ungovernable impulse to spring to his feet, grap-

THE SILENT STRANGER

ple with that look of hate, and fight for his life. In a moment, he would have made the leap regardless of consequences; but before that moment was gone, Peter Dorsey turned sullenly away. Locke's arm crept softly down till he felt the reassuring touch of cold iron in that better place — his right hand — and he was content.

"Here, you, Bob, sling some grub together and be quick about it!" cried Peter, peremptorily. "I have n't all night to throw away in passin' pleasantries to your old hide, damn you! Wrap it up pretty sudden now!"

"To be sure, Pete, to be sure," said the old man, obeying the peremptory behest with hands that trembled in their awed eagerness. "But I should think you'd eat right here fust and then stay all night. I can accommodate you fine. The other gentleman there did n't care for a bed. You stay now."

"Well, I won't, that's all," replied Peter, shortly. "I'm on my way to Yankton and have n't time to fool away, as I told you before. And besides," he added, with ironical significance, "I should hate to crowd the *gentleman*." He threw out with an elaborate flourish a bill with which to settle the score, gathered up his change and the grub package, and passed out into the night.

The keeper blew out the flickering lantern and plodded back to bed; but it was a long time before sleep came again to Locke Raynor. He lay awake listening for the sound of returning footsteps, but no sound came.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

The awful stillness of isolation once more settled down upon the valley and stole into the quiet house, and after a while Locke slept.

He resumed his journey early in the morning. Long before noon, he had arrived at the Agency, made his report, dressed for the midday dinner, and still had ample leisure in which to speculate upon the chances of his retention or dismissal, now that his errand was run.

He was still speculating two or three days afterwards while at work in the office, when the door opened and Major Mendenhall entered, accompanied by Special Inspector Warlick and a stranger whom the Agent introduced as the United States Marshal. Locke shook hands cordially. He knew something of the Marshal's history. The man's big figure and clear, penetrating eyes and determined chin tallied with the ideal engendered by a knowledge of his deeds. There was no physical resemblance between the United States Marshal and that young lieutenant of cavalry who had ridden with Locke to the parting of the ways, unless it was in a certain unfathomable look of purpose in the cheery brave eyes of the boy, which found a counterpart in the older, sadder, more worldly eyes of the Marshal; and yet strangely enough, Locke found himself thinking so strongly of Brian Levering that he could not but wonder.

"I understand that you are quite recently returned from a business trip to Yankton," said the Marshal, pleasantly, though there was a deepening of the hint of sadness in the keen eyes.

THE SILENT STRANGER

"Yes," replied Locke. "I rode both ways. One grows gray waiting for a steamboat."

"You did not ride back alone, however?"

"No. I met a young fellow in Yankton who was most excellent company. He was going my way so we fared forth together."

"What was his name? You will pardon my seemingly rude curiosity when I tell you that I am strongly interested in that young man. I want to know more about him. I confess to you frankly that such is the object of my visit to you this afternoon."

"His name is Brian Levering," said Locke, surprised. Perhaps, after all, in the network of the world's tracks, his path might cross this boy's again.

"He was an army officer, was he not?"

"I think he is a lieutenant of cavalry."

"And he was bearing special despatches to Fort Abraham Lincoln?"

"I do not know. I did not ask his business," said Locke, simply.

The Marshal shot a quick glance at him from under grizzled brows.

"Three days in his company and yet do not know his business!" he exclaimed, thoughtfully. "He must have been a surly fellow."

"On the contrary!" cried Locke, warmly, "he was one of the friendliest fellows I ever knew. He did not ask me my business either, but I told him. I am afraid I told him a lot. Maybe I did n't give him a chance

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

to talk about himself," he concluded, smiling a little dubiously.

"Did you know where the young man was going when you parted company?"

"Not definitely. He went north. I inferred that he was bound for one of the up-river forts."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"No."

"He is dead," said the United States Marshal.

"Dead!" echoed Locke, with an uncomprehending stare. "Dead!" he repeated, mechanically.

"Yes, dead," said the Marshal. "He was found murdered the very next day, only a very few miles from that old shack near the Crossing. I learned upon investigation that you and he had separated at the Crossing after journeying thus far together. As the last man seen with Brian Levering, I have come to you at once to ask you to tell me all the circumstances connected with your trip together, and whether he said or did anything to lead you to suspect that he feared foul play, and if so, from what source. We have as yet no clue. We think his death may have been retributory — as an Indian looks at those things. The Major, here, inclines to the opinion that this young life was sacrificed because of the vow of some aggrieved red man who in quick retaliation for some wrong, real or fancied, had sworn to kill the first white man he saw. It has happened. Brian Levering met his death by the foulest treachery. He was shot in the back. It must have been from ambush. The Major is brokenhearted to think

THE SILENT STRANGER

it happened among the presumably peaceful and friendly Agency Indians — before the hostile country was even sighted.”

“Dead!” repeated Locke, wonderingly. “Dead! He —” his voice broke a little, “he was a good comrade.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE POT OF GOLD AT THE RAINBOW'S END

“**O**F course,” said Mr. Warlick, oilily, “you will not object to the Marshal’s searching you, just to satisfy public sentiment and to avoid any unpleasant contingencies which might possibly arise in the future. Such a search, we all understand, will be entirely perfunctory; but it is the customary procedure and you will doubtless gladly conform to it.”

Now it is altogether probable that if the suggestion had emanated from either of the other two men, Locke would have submitted, with the best grace a free-born citizen may rally to his support on such a humiliating occasion, to the indignity which stern necessity so often imposes upon innocent men with the high justification that the right may ultimately triumph; but coming as it did, from the source it did, conformity to it was not to be thought of for a moment.

“I certainly do object,” he said, decidedly. “I have not been suspected of the least complicity in the affair, so there is absolutely no reason for such a course as you suggest. Under the circumstances, I should consider such an act a piece of impertinence which I could not readily overlook. Decidedly, Mr. Inspector, I object to the imputation which a search would imply.”

THE POT OF GOLD

"I, too, feel that it would be an unnecessary insult," agreed the Agent, loyally. "Only a suspicion of guilty knowledge could possibly warrant such a proceeding."

"Of course," said Mr. Warlick, suavely, "there is an imputation which might very naturally be applied to a man who was last seen with a man found murdered the next morning. I do not make such an application, I assure you. I only mention what conclusions disinterested persons might very readily reach after having become acquainted with the last known events connected with the poor young man's last night upon earth."

The Marshal, who as yet had said nothing on the disputed subject, hereupon turned the full gleam of his penetrating eyes first upon the Special Inspector and then upon Locke Raynor.

"I think you 'd better let me get into your pockets," he said briefly.

Locke flushed resentfully. He was on the point of haughtily differing with the United States Marshal when that great reader of men added with apparent unconcern, "You see — it might save trouble later on."

And Locke, looking savagely upon the smooth little man with the shining boots, was yet wise enough to realize that the Marshal was right when he said, "You see — it might save trouble later on." So he resisted the impulse to seize the man by the collar and shake him till the gold-rimmed eye-glasses should shiver to pieces on the rough cottonwood flooring and until the polished boots should dance a double shuffle amidst the crystal *débris*.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Go ahead," he said, tersely enough, to the Marshal.

"I'll be as gentlemanly as I can," apologized the Marshal, the glimmer of a smile playing around his keen eyes.

He pulled out a linen handkerchief and squinted carelessly at the plainly written word in a corner of the hem. Locke smiled with a quick relief when the Marshal said, "Raynor — as plain as day. Now the lieutenant's name was Levering — Brian Levering." It was a relief from a danger that had not been remembered until the Marshal's deft hands had shaken out the white folds. He had been systematically destroying marked linen since his residence at the Agency but something might have escaped his vigilance.

"You see," pursued the Marshal, replacing after a cursory glance a handful of small silver, "the boy had a relative in Yankton — a half-brother. This brother called to see him after Brian had gone upstairs that night at the hotel. They spent the rest of the evening together. The brother is an unmarried man running on the railroad. He can identify some of the things Brian carried with him. For instance —"

He was carelessly fingering some bank notes in a bill book when the pause came. It was an ominous quiet after the easy flow of explanations. He had been talking thus freely to pass the time and he had been a little haunted, too, with the thought of the boy who was found dead in a lonely valley. When he began with "For instance," he had not dreamed that he would find anything. He was not looking for anything.

T H E P O T O F G O L D

The shock of the discovery held him dumb. He did not even glance at Locke. Instead, he stared thoughtfully and for a long time at what he held in his hands. Gradually, his already stern mouth hardened yet more. His lips drew together in a thin line. Slowly, he drew the handkerchief once more from the young man's pocket. Special Inspector Warlick was like a hawk hovering greedily by, ready to swoop down upon his victim when the time should be ripe. Locke gripped the back of his chair hard — gripped it until the pressure brought out bloodless streaks on his hands. Had he blundered after all? Slowly, the Marshal's eyes turned to the name in the corner. His face was a study. Warlick could contain himself no longer. He leaned over softly. His eyes were a gleam with fiendish curiosity. Suddenly, the Marshal crumpled the square of linen in his hand and slipped it into an inner pocket of his own with every appearance of absent-mindedness. When he looked at it before and replaced it indifferently where he had found it, he thought that the Indian country was full of men who did not answer to the names written for them on time-yellowed pages of family Bibles in the old-fashioned chirography of an earlier generation. He had been thoroughly imbued also with the notion that the murder was an Indian one, even though the short brown hair of the scalp-lock had not been touched by profane and blood-crazed hands. Many things might have happened to prevent the red-skin from carrying off his trophy. This time, as he absent-mindedly swept the handkerchief from the greedy

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

gaze of the Inspector, he believed from the depths of his soul that Locke Raynor was guilty. He kept on believing it for many and many a long day. Thus it was that he snapped out to the Agent as if there had been no halt in his remarks and ignoring the Inspector with contemptuous indifference to his presence or interest in the affair:

“For instance, this bank note I now hold in my hand. You will readily see, Major, how peculiarly it is mutilated. It is strange how dependent this big world is upon little things and how tiny a card sometimes may call a gigantic bluff. Michael Levering described just such a bill as is this to me as being among his brother’s effects when he left him at twelve o’clock the night before the two young fellows left the capital. And it is the awful irony of fate that this same bill was one of those given by Michael to Brian because the elder brother thought the younger would fare better through this wild region if he were better supplied with lucre. Michael remembers it so well because he contemplated turning it into the Treasury but decided to pass it on once more and let the other fellow take the trouble.”

“Of course,” said Locke, with a smile that was absolutely unforeshadowed of the trouble which was to be his allotment in the Indian country, “it is preposterous to connect me in any way with that atrocious murder. I do not suppose that you do, but your official duty demands that you identify this bank note and endeavor to trace it back through the hands through which it has passed since Michael Levering gave it to his brother.

THE POT OF GOLD

I do not blame you in the least though I confess for other reasons, understand me, for other altogether innocent reasons," he looked straight at the Marshal as he spoke, "primarily, the inalienable right of a man to his own business, I did at first strongly object to being searched. This finding of yours has changed everything. I am now as keen for the scent as you could possibly be. We will run it down together. My honor demands that my possession of this bill be explained away. I confess to you honestly, Marshal and Major, that I have not the slightest memory of having ever seen this note before."

"By far the wisest, the surest, and the quickest way is for my good friend, the Marshal, to take Mr. Raynor and the bill both to Yankton where Mr. Raynor can explain his possession to much better advantage to the Grand Jury which is most fortunately sitting there now," put in Mr. Warlick, complacently.

"Damn you, Warlick, keep out of this, will you?" cried Locke, in deep disgust. "If you don't, I'll kick you out. The United States Marshal is a competent officer. He does n't need any assistance from you."

He was very angry. He did not remember having ever been so angry before. Special Inspector Warlick had so small a soul and so big a manifestation of it. Perhaps it was not so much to be wondered at. How small were fleas and mosquitoes and such like; but how big their manifestation of themselves in their bite!

"I think," he continued, more calmly and again addressing the two to the exclusion of the Inspector, "that

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

I know, however, and can prove beyond question just when and where that bill came into my possession. When Brian Levering and I parted company, I stopped for the night at that disreputable road-house near the Crossing. I had known the place before. I had had occasion, acting under orders from Major Mendenhall, as he will readily recall, to hand three low-down, ornery cusses their walking papers. They were habitual offenders. They had been smuggling whiskey constantly into the Reservation and selling it to the Indians. I was accompanied on that memorable occasion by a missionary, one Hugh Hunt. Perhaps you know him. We threatened them with the law if they did not cross the border that night. After all, it might have been better to get the law after them in the first place. Perhaps, if we had — but that is neither here nor there now. In the Indian country, it sometimes happens that there is not enough law to go round; or if there is, it does not always go the rounds. It is far from being a peace-pipe in that respect. However that may be, we considered a moving on with a little kick to accelerate the movement, the simplest and surest way of getting rid of the obnoxious characters. So we did the kicking and they did the moving. When I stopped at the house on my way back from Yankton, there was a new man installed — a fellow by the name of Bob Bent. I never saw him before. I went to bed on my saddle in the corner. Along in the night, I was awakened by a great stamping and loud talking, and who should come in but Peter Dorsey. He ordered

THE POT OF GOLD

a lunch which he took with him. He said he was *en route* to Yankton. I wondered where he had been hiding all this time and my mind was thoroughly made up to run him down again and investigate his intentions as soon as I could again leave the Agency. Some money, of course, changed hands. I wasn't caring to be recognized just then so I lay low and didn't squint an eye at the operation. But the next morning, having no change, I had to throw down a greenback of a somewhat large denomination — twenty dollars, I think. I got a couple of bills in return and some small silver. I never looked at them twice. I have no idea what he charged me for my accommodations. I did not ask him. I did not even count the change. But I do remember opening that bill book to stow away two bills, so I must have received them in exchange. I think you would do well to put Peter Dorsey under arrest. At all events, interview old Bob Bent as the next link in the chain to me. He can doubtless inform you from whom this bill came to him. Travel through the Reservation is not so great that he should forget."

"It was too bad you didn't kick a little harder. You see he came back," said the Marshal, dryly.

"Yes, he came back," rejoined Locke, wearily, seeming to see the fair young face of the lieutenant of cavalry lying all night alone under the Summer stars — surrounded by looming masses of dark hills which seemed doubly solemn and lonely in the cool, mysterious half light of the moon and stars.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"I shall investigate, all in good time, Peter Dorsey's excuse for encumbering the earth, and shall inquire especially as to his doings on the night in question," said the Marshal. "In the meantime, you will please prepare to accompany me to Yankton to-morrow. You will understand that under the circumstances there is nothing for me to do other than to keep you in charge until this matter has been thoroughly looked into."

"I understand. I am perfectly willing to go," said Locke, quietly.

"What did you say about a boat, Major?" asked the Marshal, briskly.

"There ought to be a boat along to-morrow or next day," replied the Major, "if she has n't struck a snag or a sand-bank."

"If she is not in by the day after to-morrow, we'll ride," said the Marshal, with official brevity.

The steamer came into port in the early morning and in an hour or two was again ready to continue her journey down the river. As her warning whistle blew, two men came out of the office together. Locke was not suffering from any sense of shame. He was altogether innocent. That he was the last man seen with Brian Levering was unfortunate only in that it caused him some little personal inconvenience. It seemed a little odd that he should have been so possessed to make friends with the Lieutenant that quiet evening at the supper table. But so it had happened, and they had gone forth together. For three days they had been congenial companions. They had laughed and talked

THE POT OF GOLD

together, and been still together; they had eaten together and drunk together and slept together; and now, that it was over, he could not be sorry. He was sorry that the boy was gone but he could not be sorry that they had fared together, even though now he must be hauled back to Yankton to answer in some way for the boy who could not answer for himself because he had been found dead in a lonely valley. It was inevitable that it should be so. He was the last man known to have been with Brian Levering. He could not quarrel with the justice which was seeking the whole truth. He was very glad to tell the little he knew. There was nothing for which to hang one's head — even with the United States Marshal hovering so near that all who saw must know that he was virtually a prisoner. It was not as if he had been accused of murder or complicity — he was only going to tell what he knew about the last hours of Brian Levering upon earth. And the bank note — he shrugged his shoulders as he strode out of the door. That was the least of his troubles. He got it in change at the road-house. That was the easiest thing in the world to explain. The keeper would remember just when and from whom it came into his till. Locke himself had not the shadow of a doubt as to who took that bill and others from the Lieutenant. The thought of being able to make this man answer for the murder — this man whose gigantic insolence and recklessness had brought him back, only to step unwittingly on the key that would spring the trap that would swing the noose, added zest

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

to a journey which otherwise might have been exceedingly tedious and even humiliating. Locke was honest in his thoughts but he had not yet seen Katharine Menendhall.

She was standing on the little porch of the Agent's residence just across from the office. She was not alone. Hugh Hunt was with her. When he first saw her, she was smiling radiantly and holding out a hand in greeting. But the Missionary seemed grave enough as he joined her on the rude veranda. It seemed to Locke that her hair never had been so bright before as it was that morning in early August, with the sun shining upon it. He threw up his head. She should see that he was not afraid — that he was not walking in the shadow. He stopped involuntarily.

"Come, Mr. Raynor, the whistle has sounded!" cried the Marshal, impatiently.

Why, she must have seen him! Her laughing face had been turned his way. What had Hugh Hunt said to her that caused her face suddenly to grow as grave as his own? She had turned away then without speaking to him — to him who loved her. He snapped his lips on the words of greeting and good-bye, which were almost said, crushed his hat down over his forehead, and hastened past. She had known that he was going. At least, everybody else at the Agency knew it. She must have seen him. If she had wanted to, she could easily have smiled and said good-bye. For the first time, his head drooped a little, a sense of humiliation crept into his soul, and he longed with all his heart to

THE POT OF GOLD

strike the United States Marshal into the dust and then hasten back to demand of Katharine Mendenhall why she had turned her face away. Was it because Hugh Hunt was telling her about the murder and of his, Locke's, embarrassing position in the sad affair? And was it possible that she had no more faith in him than to allow anything so purely circumstantial as his late companionship with the man found dead to undermine the friendly and seemingly understanding comradeship which had been theirs since that night when the wolves howled so dismally? Or — which seemed much more likely to him just then, so absolutely did he look upon himself as a man hastening to clear up a dark and hateful mystery, not as one slinking away in shadow to stand trial for his life — was she listening to a love tale from the lips of the pale priest?

The steamer, having replenished its supply of fuel from the mass of cord-wood heaped up on the bank for that purpose, and having taken on board the few passengers southward bound from this point, was backing away from the shore and from the curious gaze of the Indians camping in the vicinity. It mattered not now what Katharine Mendenhall was hearing or saying. It was too late for him to help it if he could. He went at once to his stateroom and stared moodily all day long at the panorama of the swiftly gliding shore.

"Miss Mendenhall," Hugh Hunt was saying just after the warning whistle had blown, "General Custer has found gold in the Black Hills!"

"Well, and why not?" asked Katharine, carelessly,

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

at first, because she did not understand, and because she thought Locke Raynor was coming across to say good-bye. She had come to the front porch because she knew the steamer would be leaving very soon.

"I am afraid, are n't you?" asked Hugh, simply.

He did not look as if he had slept much during the night. He looked tired—body and soul of him—for what he had dreaded had come to pass.

He had been reading far into the night when the news came to him. Indian runners had come direct from the land of discovered gold and had spread the tale in every camp on the way. Signal fires were already burning—the pungent smoke rising slowly up into the lazy air from many a butte and from many a river bluff. They had not halted at hostile camps only—those runners. They had continued to the very Missouri itself to carry the astounding report to the peaceful Agency Indians. Thus it was that before ever General Custer's glowing and rhapsodical account of the surpassing beauty and fertility of the country and of the immense possibilities of his great find had reached military headquarters of the Department of Dakota at St. Paul, nearly every Indian on the Great Reservation was possessed of the momentous fact of the discovery, and was biding his time. There was never lacking, even in the times of the wildest upheavals of Indian disaffection and insubordination, some good friend among them—half in love with the new God brought to them by the young man who ate and drank, who moved and had his being, with them, and altogether

THE POT OF GOLD

in love with the man himself — to keep him informed of all that happened among the Dakotas, bearing upon the great unrest, so that he was constantly in touch with the mighty pulse of their life. To-night, it was Running Bird himself, who, seeing the light burning so late, glided up to the window and after standing motionless for some time looking in upon the quiet figure reading by the table tapped lightly upon the glass. The face, pressed against the lighted window, surrounded by black night, looked wild enough to have startled the bravest; but Hugh Hunt was not afraid. He knew the face at once. He laid aside his book, opened the door, and invited his strange midnight guest to enter. It was thus the news came to the whites at Big Bend through Running Bird, who had it of the Indian runners who came straight from the pot of gold which man, in his foolish and short-sighted lust of it, childishly thinks lies at the end of the rainbow; so that he spends lifetimes in far and unprofitable journeys. And though countless ones, achieving the journey after a weary round of stumblings and brier pricks, find that they had been lured on by an impudent will-o'-the-wisp through whose mazy, tantalizing light the gleam of gold was falsely made to shine as the real light of the world, still the strife goes on, and the journeyings, and one will not accept the testimony of another but each must find out for himself.

Hugh Hunt said to Running Bird's flashing eyes, perturbed face and scornful soul, "Wait a little."

"The Slender Ash said that before. I have waited

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

and you see what has come. Shall I wait forever? Am I a fool, to listen forever to silly counsels? Or a coward, that I am afraid to strike? ”

And the Missionary, weary, his faith at low ebb, still said, “Wait a little, Running Bird.”

When morning came, having forgotten to eat, he went over to the Agency to tell them there of the terrible thing which had been told to him in the night.

“Afraid? Yes, I am afraid,” said Katharine, smiling a little. “I am afraid that I do not understand your afraid.”

“It is such an unreasoning craze—the craze for gold,” said Hugh, musingly, “and it is as strong as death—as unquenchable as prairie fire—as resistless as many waters—as heartless as Medusa—as faithless as Judas Iscariot.”

“But if we must have it, we will buy the land and the Indians shall name their price and there will be no trouble at all,” said Katharine, with a fine optimism.

“The Dakotas will not sell,” said Hugh, quietly.

“Are you so sure? How do you know?”

“Because it takes three-fourths of the adult males in all this Great Sioux Reservation to sign away any part of it. Do you think Red Cloud, Spotted Tail, Black Moon, Gall, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and a hundred others, with all their warriors, to say nothing of my own Running Bird with his band of proud Brules, will sign away the very heart of their possessions? I know them too well to think that, Miss Mendenhall.”

THE POT OF GOLD

"Why," cried Katharine, breathlessly, "do you think we will take it away from them? Oh, Mr. Hunt, do you? How can we?" It was then that her face grew as grave as his own, and it was then that Locke Raynor wondered savagely what the Missionary was saying to her. "We cannot, Mr. Hunt," she continued, the gravity still on her fair face; but the eyes lifted to his were serene in the faith of youth. "My country is behind that treaty. My country has given her sacred word; and my country, why, my country is *America!*" she cried, a flush of enthusiasm rising to her cheeks.

"You are right, Miss Mendenhall," said Hugh, a prophetic smile lighting up his worn features, "*my* country is America! The country which through blood and tears freed herself from tyranny, which through blood and tears purged herself clean of internal tumors of human slavery, that country which beckons so kindly and generously makes a home for Slav and Teuton and Latin, and for all the nations upon earth, will remember my Dakotas in their day!"

It was one day a little past the middle of the month when Hugh Hunt entered the office at Big Bend, where he found the sub-agent in charge. Hugh had just returned from Yankton where he and Major Mendenhall had been called in consequence of Locke Raynor's arrest.

"Do you know if Running Bird is anywhere around the Agency?" he asked.

"He called here the other day and asked for you," replied the sub-agent. "When I told him that you

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

were down the river, he said, 'Tell my white brother that my heart is heavy and I go to bury it for a while in my own country. I have sorrow he knows not of. Tell him I will wait yet a little while — but I cannot wait very long.' ”

“Have you heard the news, Mr. Roberts?” asked Hugh, joyously.

“News? What news? Do I ever hear any news? Do grass and hills and stockade walls prattle news?” cried Roberts, impatiently. “Tell me quick, man, if you don't want me to die of suspense.”

“I thought you must know. A steamer passed down a few days ago, one of my old men just told me, so I supposed it had surely spread the glad tidings. I heard it before I left Yankton. That is why I must find Running Bird. I am afraid he has gone into the wilderness.”

“Man, man, are you a fish? Can't you see that flesh and blood can't stand this harrowing suspense? I am growing into a mummy before your very eyes,” cried the sub-agent, whimsically. “News? The last news I have heard was that a fellow by the name of Christopher Columbus had discovered America; but I heard afterwards that the claim could not be properly substantiated for lack of corroborating witnesses. So I can't say how it came out. Better not quote me as authority. There was also a rumor awhile ago that some fellows by the name of Lewis and Clarke had climbed up this cursed river in a boat, but I'll tell you frankly that I don't believe it. The idea is preposter-

THE POT OF GOLD

ous. Nothing ever happened in this God-forsaken country."

"But the best thing in all the world has happened," said Hugh, and his laugh was boyish in its glee. "Listen, man! General Sheridan has telegraphed to General Terry, absolutely prohibiting all white persons from attempting to enter the Black Hills; and he has further instructed Terry to put forces along the Missouri and Platte Rivers to seize and destroy all outfits of people who are trying to sneak their way into the Indian country, and to send all such offenders themselves to the nearest military post. Is n't it almost too good to be true?"

"Oh!" said the sub-agent, blankly. "Is that all? I knew that before. I thought you were going to tell me something interesting."

"Yes, that is all," replied Hugh, with a quiet, rather quizzical smile. "I think I have seldom heard such good news before. I must tell it to Running Bird."

CHAPTER XV

THE BRIDGE-BUILDER

FIRST, however, he must report to Mrs. Mendenhall and Katharine, and give them the Agent's message, before losing himself, possibly for weeks, on the trackless reservation beyond the river. Running Bird had gone into the wilderness to think it all out for himself. He might even fast as he had fasted those several days before his dream came to him, peopled with the god-spirits that were to shape and guide his earthly pilgrimage as a warrior of the great Alliance. He was but a stripling in those days, but his fasting had been as rapt and as consecrated as that of many an early Christian, kneeling all day long and all night long on a stone floor, praying for light, lacerating his body with stinging whip lashes — still praying for light; but he had not altogether understood his dream. True, a famous jossakeed of his tribe had rendered a sweeping interpretation of it that admitted no doubts; yet, though he voiced them not aloud, there were many things which Running Bird still pondered in his heart. His intelligence was of a so much superior order than that of the juggling mountebank, as his father's before him had been, that

THE BRIDGE - BUILDER

Hugh knew he could not altogether adhere to the line of the old medicine man's wildly fantastic translation of the mysteries of the dream celebration of his manhood. Hugh longed to find him soon. He did not want him to fast again. Running Bird was still weak from his barbarous but devoted celebration of the sun dance. Another period of food renunciation might be the beginning of that decline which Hugh Hunt foresaw with a great sadness must come to many and many of his Dakotas before the mighty transition should be accomplished, and Christianity — health of soul and body — should stand triumphant on the fallen breast of paganism's dead and crumbling shell. And he could not spare Running Bird yet. "Oh, Elder Brother of Running Bird and me, not yet! For it is through Running Bird that I would find all the little red brothers of Thee and me who have strayed away to play in the bright sunshine of the prairies. The prairies are very big, Elder Brother, and I could not find them all — all the little children — without Running Bird."

The Agency ladies were at home. They had already lunched, and no amount of persuasion could prevail upon Hugh to allow them to prepare anything for him but some army biscuit, the remains of a pan of baked beans, and a cup of coffee. There were no hunters left in camp and it was many a long day since game had appeared on the table of Tahu Tanka.

"I cannot spare the time," said Hugh, smiling deprecatingly.

"You are always in a hurry," chided Mrs. Menden-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

hall, gently, her faded blue eyes surveying him very kindly. "Do you never rest? Now I, I never find anything to do in this bleak and lonesome Indian country. I am tired of resting. I should be very grateful for something to do; but I do not know where to look for it. You will not even let me have the pleasure of trying to throw together for you a mock salad or a soup. It would really be a charity. You are indefatigable in your Indian charities. Do you think white people never are in need? Or are we beyond the pale?"

"Yes, white people do need charity," said Hugh, with a grateful smile, reminiscent of many a little courtesy received at the hands of the Agency ladies, mother and daughter, "and I have been the recipient of so very many since you came that for very shame I must be up and doing for myself. I stopped to-day only to tell you about the Major. He was detained on important business — no, not connected with the trial in any way — Agency business — so he could not return with me at this time. He sent a letter — here it is — and I am to tell you that there is not the least cause for worry of any kind while he is absent. Since General Sheridan has kept the faith and driven back all gold-seekers (you have heard, have you not? — a steamer brought the news from Bismark, I understand; and you were altogether right, Miss Mendenhall, and you make me ashamed of my doubtings), our Agency Indians are peacefully happy once more — the Government thinks they never were affected — and the hostiles have quieted

THE BRIDGE - BUILDER

down, too. You are not to worry about anything, and you will forgive me, won't you, if I go soon, now, to find Running Bird?"

"But you are so tired," said Katharine, a little wistfully. It was all Running Bird, Running Bird, Running Bird! After all, he was only an Indian — and Indians were dirty, without ambition, thieving, treacherous, of limited possibilities of development, ungrateful; while Hugh Hunt was refined, scholarly, with a mind of almost infinite possibilities, a great heart, a great faith, a great sincerity. What a waste! What a waste to the real world of thinking men and women! And then there was Locke Raynor — a man of action, of strong love of life and liberty, a man who knew the world and was endowed with a peculiar naturalness to cope with its problems — and Locke Raynor was languishing in prison — fettered. What a travesty! And still it was all Running Bird, Running Bird, Running Bird! She had tried to rise to the stature measured for her by this devotee. She had tried harder than she had ever tried anything before in all her life. But they were impossible, these Indians — oh, so impossible.

"And you have not yet told us how the trial came out," said Mrs. Mendenhall, only waiting for that before excusing herself to read the letter from the bluff Major, who was as much her lover to-day as he had ever been before the heaped up years had exacted their toll of gems from her eyes, gold from her hair, and buoyancy from her once lithe figure. "That poor

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

young man! Was he acquitted? He was as guiltless as you or I. Of course, he would n't come back here after all the trouble, I suppose. He could n't be blamed for that. Has he gone back East? I liked him. He was so good to us," continued the gracious little lady. "Katharine is so taken up with her hobby of visiting the Indian women that she forgets that we poor white people have any claims upon her at all. But that poor young clerk was a well-intentioned fellow, I'm sure, and she will be glad to know how it all came out, won't you, Katharine?"

"Yes," said Katharine in a low voice, "I shall be glad to know how it all came out — if Mr. Hunt has the time."

"He will take the time," said Hugh, quietly. "There is not much to tell. Mr. Raynor was indicted by the Grand Jury. He has retained a splendid firm of lawyers — Barton and Sampson — but I am afraid there is going to be a hard fight. The case was continued."

"Until when?" asked Katharine, and, "What a shame!" exclaimed her mother.

"Until February — when the next term of court convenes."

"But of course my father has gone on his bond," said Katharine. "Is — Mr. Raynor coming back to the Agency?"

"The charge is murder, you know," said Hugh, gravely. "It is not a bailable offence."

Was the world spinning around all of a sudden —

THE BRIDGE-BUILDER

or was it she? Was a storm brewing or was it already night? It could not be night. They had but just lunched. And yet it was growing quite dark. She gripped herself hard. Objects ceased their swimming in the air, and once more she could see clearly the grave-eyed young man leaning back from the table after the quiet utterance that had, in the winking of an eye, changed the aspect of all the world for her forever. In prison — in jail — like a common criminal! He would come out with the prison pallor — if he came out at all. Oh, if he came out at all! He would be marked forevermore. She could hear her mother chattering soft but voluble expressions of sympathy, of surprise, even wondering if, after all, it might be that he had done it. And then Mrs. Mendenhall left the room, after excusing herself to the busy man, who must not be kept any longer gossiping with a pack of women folks; so Katharine, a little pale but bravely smiling, took up the thread of the broken discourse, as women must, though worlds do change and men languish in prison.

When a little Indian boy came to the door leading the Missionary's horse all strapped with blanket and saddle bags, ready for a journey into the wilderness, she said she would walk to the ferry with him if he did not mind — it was a beautiful day — her mother would be napping, shortly — she wanted something to do, and — she wanted so much to talk to him a little while. She would just walk to the river with him, and then she would not keep him from Running Bird any longer. While she was talking, she was tying on a big shady

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

garden hat; then she picked up a flimsy little white silk parasol that made Hugh Hunt smile, it was so flagrantly unnecessary in conjunction with the hat, and so ludicrously inadequate in this land of sun and wind and shadeless expanse; then she said, "I am ready."

"Now talk to me," said the Missionary, gently, as they turned into the trail to the river, the horse docilely following behind. "What troubles you, Miss Mendenhall?"

"I don't know — so many things," replied Katharine slowly. "It all seems such a waste of time."

"What seems such a waste of time?" asked Hugh, with a quizzical smile, though he knew. There had been times when he thought so, too. But he thought those times could not come to him any more, now that he could preach faith, simply keeping the faith, to his Dakotas, with a clean heart and conscience, because his own people had kept faith with them. Running Bird could not now say, "I have waited too long." No Dakota could now say to him, "White man say his God say no steal, no lie, no kill, no go to war, to *believe*. We *believe* they no steal, they no lie, they no kill, they no go to war — but they do. Indian no want that kind of God."

"To teach people who would so much rather not be taught. To teach them to be clean, when they would so much rather not be clean. To teach them to sew, when close application is their abomination. To teach them to read and write and cipher, when they had so much, oh, so much rather be playing games, sleeping

THE BRIDGE-BUILDER

in the shade, hunting, and laughing, and if they must starve to-day, to laugh still because to-morrow comes the feasting. Why pamper them with hospitals and medicines, when they die so contentedly without them — and hate and fear them so intensely? Who knows but that their way is the better way for them — perhaps for us? ”

“ Smoke Woman was not content that White Flower should die without them,” said Hugh, quietly.

“ Possibly not. But is she not one in a thousand? Do not they all flee from the terrible *wakan* of our physicians as we would flee from a pestilence? They do not understand it. They think it is witchcraft, pure and simple. They would lie down and die before they would voluntarily enter a hospital. You know that. You have fought it for how many weary years? Have they not had a fair trial? Is it any further use? They are so happy — let alone. Then why not let them alone, Mr. Hunt? ”

“ Miss Mendenhall,” began Hugh, very gravely, “ if you or I should suddenly be snatched away from our kind and taken to live with a tribe of pagan Sioux — never any more to see a white person; never any more to read a book, to hear a song or a prayer; never any more to see cultivated fields of things growing, corn and wheat and thrifty gardens; to eat bread, not by the sweat of our face, but by the skill of our arm and the acuteness of our sight; to wander whither we would without moral responsibility or obligation; to stay in no place long enough to learn to

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

love the soil for the soil's sake and to test the possibilities of its development, only to love it because it is fatherland and because of what roams over its prairies all ready for the hand of the hunter, without weary months of ploughing and harrowing and planting and waiting—it would not take you or me very long to become as the tribe. We are none of us so far removed from savagery that the process of reversion would be long on the way. If, on the other hand, Running Bird or White Flower, or any other full-blooded Sioux should be absolutely removed from all tribal relationship—taken right into the heart of a white settlement, never any more to see one of his race; never again to indulge in dance orgies of religious fanaticism or to taste the blood of any enemy; never any more to press the bare back of an Indian pony flying in wildly intoxicating pursuit of the buffalo; never any more to hear the ignorant, bigoted, superstitious make-believes of a medicine man, or to be harangued by a would-be leader—it would not be very long before he would be thinking and acting like a civilized being. We are none of us so degenerate but that the smouldering spark of divinity in all of us may be fanned to a flame. It would take Running Bird a little longer to become a perfect exponent of advanced civilization than for me to become a savage, because it is always easier to slide down hill on a sled than to climb the hill dragging the sled behind. But in either case it would not be long. But when we take the whole tribes—a complete nation—drive them

THE BRIDGE-BUILDER

back until there is no place beyond; usurp their territory; isolate them; limit their boundaries; take from them their independence; tell them to cultivate the soil, when they know no more about farming than they do about Sanscrit; prey upon their credulity; gird them round about with regiments of soldiers to keep them whipped into a grovelling submission they do not understand; put two or three men into the midst of thousands to keep the internal machinery oiled,—from whence then can come enlightenment, emulation, development, civilization, Christianity? I do not say that there is specific fault anywhere. Perhaps it is the best that can be done under existing conditions. I do not know. But this I do know, and from the depths of my heart and soul I answer you: they have not had a fair trial! We have but just begun.”

“But surely they are getting worse instead of better,” exclaimed Katharine, not yet beaten in her young untried discouragement. “They are dirtier than they were. They steal more (I am told that ‘picking and stealing’ were unknown quantities to the earlier Dakotas) and lie more, since civilization has touched their outer ranks. It is as if they greedily absorbed the bad of the new influence and eschew the good. They are more superstitious because our ways are new mysteries to them. Do you remember that terrible thunder storm we had a few days ago? It was while you were gone, by the way. After it was over, Mr. Asher Newman went down to the river bank to fly his kite. He is a lonely man and has many odd amusements.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

There was a fine fresh breeze blowing. It was not many minutes before a crowd of Indians had gathered about him whining, gesticulating, threatening. I could not understand it all then but he told me afterwards that they thought the kite was a messenger calling back the thunder and lightning, and that he had been practising black art before their very eyes. They were like children in their unreasoning fright. It seems to me death comes among them oftener than it used to. Does not disease take off more of our Agency Indians than did their tribal wars in the old days?"

"Perhaps — for a little while," responded Hugh, musingly. "All transition periods are hard. A better time will recruit their broken ranks. You will see."

"*Possibly*," said Katharine, pessimistically. Then she continued her argument. "They promise to send their children to school to learn to read and farm, and then abet them in their running away."

"Yes, and we feed them and promise to keep on feeding them till they learn to farm and become self-supporting. So they don't learn to farm, and they consider themselves already self-supporting, because the land was theirs. It is only right that it should provide them sustenance. They are like the leisure class of any people — they sit back and enjoy the income from their landed estates. It is sure — this income. There is no need for them to plan and struggle and economize. And as with all such classes, so much leisure, without a corresponding dock in income, af-

THE BRIDGE-BUILDER

fords an excellent breeding ground for idleness, superstition, corruption, degeneracy,—mentally, morally, physically. Is it any wonder?"

"But do you see a way out of the wilderness, Mr. Hunt? Oh, I know I have too little faith; but grant them years of fair trial—what then? Will they survive our civilization? We are so utterly dissimilar. Shall we not rather have refined them off the earth? I have been thinking about these things since I half promised to teach in the mission school this Winter, and I am afraid. It all seems so hopeless."

"I see a way out of the wilderness," answered Hugh, and with his eyes lifted to the hill-tops, agleam with a strange prophetic exaltation, it was as if he were reading from some scroll unseen of any but him whose faith should endure "to the end." "I see that civilization, which you spoke of as touching the outer ranks only, finally make triumphant entrance to the inner sanctuary of their pagan hearts. I see that the siege was long and hard. I see that nothing availed until we left off dawdling about our camps on the outer edge of the wilderness and boldly plunged within—to find the way out. I see even then years of seemingly fruitless skirmishing around the guarded citadel in the very heart of the wilderness, and that nothing availed until we left off gathering our garments about us for fear of defilement, until we repudiated our relationship with the Pharisee, aye, until we met and mingled as man to man, friend to friend, brother to brother; then only the

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

walls fell and the miracle was accomplished — the miracle of *one people*, Miss Mendenhall, *one people*, out of the wilderness."

"What! Shall we marry the survivors and thus settle the question forever by assimilation?"

"Why not?" asked Hugh, with a far away smile. "I do not say yes, but why not? We are prone to prate of our Pilgrim blood or of our aristocratic Jamestown descent. Why should not our children pride themselves on their descent from an older line yet — the line of the first Americans? Of what ingredients are we composed as a nation — German, English, French, Scandinavian, Russian — a pinch of everything — are we not? Why should the Dakotas alone be cut off from participation in the finished product? They are a free people. There is manhood there, and womanhood. There is loyalty there, and reverence. I say, why not?"

They had long since reached the river but the Missionary stood on the bank, forgetful of haste, while the swift current dragged ineffectually at the confined ferry boat. Katharine, too, had forgotten that she was keeping Running Bird waiting. She was staring breathlessly at the boldness of this man's sweeping eradication of an already foreshadowed social barrier of the future. Brilliant reds, August-stained, were gleaming from sumach bushes in the gulches, while the yellow glint of sunflowers, springing up where sod had been broken, spoke eloquently of the golden glow of setting Summer.

THE BRIDGE-BUILDER

"But when shall all these things come to pass, Mr. Hunt?" asked Katharine. For one brief moment, she had been given to see, however falteringly, the infinity which alone hedged in the soul of the man, and then the old harrowing, limited, bound-down world-problems again settled around her to fret her own soul. "Will the regeneration of horrid hostile leaders, like Red Cloud, come in our day?"

"What would you think of me if I said that such men have not far to go to be regenerate? Remember that those Tetons are fighting for everything a man holds sacred — fatherland, independence, hearth and home, national existence. If it does not come in my day or yours, must it then be that it cannot be? Little girl, all great world-movements must undergo a transition period, when things seem worse than they were before — worse, at least, to our poor limited vision; but one lifetime is such an infinitesimal part of infinity, how can one hope to see clearly the whole scheme. If I see my little way clear, and my child sees his, and my child's child sees his, and we walk therein, fitting those little lengths of light together as we go, have we not finally girdled the universe with light, and therefore necessarily bridged the chasm between the finite and the infinite? Am I preaching, young lady? Forgive me. One little word more. Many people still think the negro was better off in bondage. In many ways the carpet-bagging days of Reconstruction seemed more dreadful than slavery or the horrors of internecine war. The Reign of Terror

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

was worse — far worse — than the tyranny of the French nobles; yet all these things sprang from what was good in the first place. Something was wrong somewhere or such conditions could not arise. Something is wrong now concerning my Indians — but I must hold fast to my little light and not drop it in the confusion or the link that has grown thus far will be broken and that will make it all the harder for those who come after me to find the place again and weld their links where mine should have been. My Dakotas must have their transition period. They must suffer bodily discomforts and ills because it is a great change from freedom to confinement. Many must die of the new disease wrought by the abrupt change. Many must die because of the chafing of their proud spirits in an intolerable bondage. Many must grow lazy, corrupt, degenerate, because conditions will be such as to make them so. Many must continue to go to war because we shall still set them the example. You remember what the Uncpapa Chief, Bear's Rib, once said concerning General Harney — how he told the Indians never to go to war, and yet he was always going to war himself. Something is wrong, dear, but it is a wrong that is world-old, and you and I cannot live to see the end gloriously vindicate the creation. If the Indian regenerate does not appear in my day or yours, he will come. Never doubt it. I believe from my heart that I shall live to see his shadow looming high on the horizon."

"He — this Indian — demands too costly a sacri-

THE BRIDGE - BUILDER

fice," said Katharine, tears in her eyes. "I cannot make it seem right. What is to become of you, Mr. Hunt? Are you going to spend *all* your life out of the real world which so needs men like you?"

"What shall I be doing, do you mean?" asked Hugh, with a serene smile. "Oh, I shall be pegging away at the bridge. I must finish my length before I die, for oh, my dear, my dear, the world needs that bridge sadly, sadly!"

CHAPTER XVI

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

THE Summer passed, and the Autumn. It was very quiet on the Great Reservation. The prompt and effective carrying out of the orders of General Sheridan proved a wonderful pacifier to the Dakotas, all of whom had been so bitterly annoyed at the military invasion, and so suspicious of the Government's intentions. The enterprising and ambitious company, formed at the Territorial capital before the ink on the press which told the news of the discovery was dry, to advertise the gold fields, with Yankton as the natural gateway to this elysium, was a bubble which broke so soon that the members were left gasping at the suddenness with which their fond hopes were blighted. Like hungry trout which spring at a fly and swallow a hook, these men, with visions of glittering gold before their eyes, made their greedy spring, and the iron of their discomfiture entered into their souls.

Many bands of hostile Indians, organized for the sole purpose of resisting an expected attempt to cheat them out of their cherished treasure house, scattered to their homes and to the Fall hunting. Winter set in and froze the river, isolating yet more the lonely agen-

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

cies and military and trading posts along its course. The annuities had come up in the last steamer which had dared the daily increasing danger of becoming ice-locked. It had unloaded its cargo at the different stations along the way, intrepidly going up and up to the northernmost point of its scheduled journey; then it had passed safely back again, leaving a profound silence, a vast isolation, in the Winter-bound Indian country. The boat was the last connecting-link between the world and the wilderness. With it went the last hope of communion with one's kind and of knowledge of what was going on in the great world beyond the frozen North for more than half a year's fettered solitude, accompanied by the tearful farewells and brave God-speeds of the handful of whites scattered along the military and trading posts of the upper country. The Indians came in from their hunting and Summer wanderings for their annuities, bringing with them many hostiles who coveted the sure rations which would be provided for them at the several agencies.

It was the busy season for the Missionary. Travel was hard, but that did not keep him from his round of labor among his chosen people. The little mission school made a brave start and was flourishing. Katharine was there — not with altogether so ardent an imagination as had come to her when it was asked her what she would do if her father went back to the States. She was haunted over-much with visions of prison bars and the sternness of law. But she had a growing belief once more in the ultimate glorification

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

of the Missionary's high faith. The little black-eyed children came to love Sun-in-the-hair to the increasing forgetfulness of their innate aversion to schools in general. They brought her gifts of all the little trinkets their hearts most fondly cherished. A little child died that Winter and Katharine wept unrestrainedly when it was explained to her that the child had willed her a tiny doll, wrapped in its carrying shawl — the most dearly loved of her poor and too few possessions. Running Bird kept to his own side of the river. He was smarting under White Flower's rejection of his suit. Hugh Hunt had found him gloomy, taciturn, unresponsive, utterly unlike himself, and had left him so, but slightly cheered by the news which the Missionary had journeyed so far to impart.

February took the Agent, his wife and daughter, and the Special Inspector, together with Hugh Hunt, by slow stages, over wagon route, to Yankton, for the trial of Locke Raynor, charged with the murder of Brian Levering while the latter was bearing despatches to Fort Abraham Lincoln, and again Roberts, sub-agent for the Lower Brules and the Yanktonais, was left in charge of the two agencies, still whimsically glum for lack of news, and with less chance than ever of obtaining it.

Six months of confinement had told with terrible sureness upon Locke Raynor. He was thin, moody, and indifferent. He had endured the horror of incarceration for six long months. Those months had not gone well with him. The memory of them would have power to chafe him as long as he lived. Now he would brook

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

no attempt at another continuance — not because he still had so great a confidence in the strength of his defence, but for the reason that so sorely had his experience behind prison bars tried his proud spirit, he deemed even to hang, an innocent man, a fate preferable to any further endurance of an enforced loss of personal liberty. The jeers and gaping curiosity of a multitude of morbid onlookers had begun to seem to him as a matter of little worth, incomparably lower in power to sting and to mortify him than this unjust curtailment of his inalienable right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The two outweighed the life so that without them he was fast becoming indifferent to the life. Besides, so astounding to his self-conceit had been his indictment by the Grand Jury, that nothing which could happen now would move him to any great surprise. Certainly not to a panic of fear of death. He had had six long dragging months in which to familiarize himself with the grim spectre, and while he loved life much, he loved liberty more. He had become strangely reckless since Sampson, the younger member of the firm, had told him that the old road-house keeper's memory seemed dead beyond resuscitation.

But his morbid indifference fell from him like a one-piece garment, unclasped, when he saw the agency group down toward the front of the court room — Katharine Mendenhall sitting close to her mother, the pale Missionary to her left, the burly Major claiming the seat next to the aisle and beside his wife. Why had Katharine come? Why had she braved cold

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

and ice and snow and storm and rough wagon road for days and nights when, crude as the comforts were at the little stockaded Agency, there was always a roaring fire and a chair before it, and the indolent ease of a petted house cat who sleeps contentedly in front of the fireplace, well-knowing that in good time its saucer of milk will be forthcoming. There could be little responsibility for the women at the Agency in Winter time. They were winter-locked. They could eat and sleep and keep warm, and that was all. It was the very acme of luxurious indolence, without the fret of thinking one ought to be up and doing. There was nothing to do and nothing with which to do it if there were. He did not know that many a time while he lay listening to the wild Winter winds whistling around the jail, Katharine Mendenhall, short-skirted and fur-clad, indomitable of spirit and withal becoming more and more touched with the divine spirit of a great compassion, was struggling through drifts of snow to carry good food to an improvident family, medicine to the sick, or to lead a little child home, some day-scholar, who might have become confused by the cold and lost its way. It might even have died. Often the little children came to the mission with but meagre clothing to keep out the inclement weather. Locke Raynor did not know that these errands had toughened her skin and reddened her blood until she felt a kind of glory in defying the north wind and ruthlessly ploughing through snowdrifts as if there were no barrier on earth that could keep her from going where she listed. It gave her a pleasing sense of

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

power that was exhilarating. The contemplation of the long frosty ride to Yankton had no terrors for her, but Locke was appalled at the very thought of it, even in retrospection. There had been frequent stops on the way for the rest and comfort of the party — they had always managed to make goal for the night's shelter, for hot coffee, and for heating their stones and irons again, and Katharine came out of the experience with a glowing color and a vigorous appetite. Even her mother was none the worse, though she confessed to more chill than her ruddy daughter would acknowledge. There was something Locke did not know — something which brought Katharine to the capital despite the long and forbidding journey; and because of this thing which he did not know, he wondered much. He knew the Missionary had espoused his cause. Hugh had made that fact very plain to him long ago. It was good of him to come, even though there was nothing he could do. He remembered the Missionary's part in the banishment of the whiskey-smugglers with a smile of peculiar pleasure. He admired him for it. If Katharine loved him, well —. But their presence flushed his face, squared his jaw, and aroused his long dormant fighting spirit. Katharine did not look at him once. That he could see. She was remembering how he went away without saying good-bye, but that he could not know.

“Now you will please tell in your own words the story of your finding of the body of Brian Levering,” said the prosecuting attorney, leaning back in his chair.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

The witness on the stand was a herder. On a certain day at about ten o'clock in the morning, he was looking for stray cattle among the river bluffs. He must have been a half-mile or more from the trail. Yes, before he left the trail, he had seen a horse grazing shortly to one side. Yes, the horse was saddled but riderless. He had thought nothing of the incident. The master of him was probably not far distant. Then he had turned off into the hills. He had gone quite a ways. Then he had stumbled upon the body. It was lying at the bottom of a gulch. Yes, there was a little underbrush — not much. The man was dead. He had been shot in the back. His pockets were pulled out and had been rifled. There was nothing of value left anywhere. There was every evidence that he had been robbed. The herder had then notified the proper authorities and that was all he knew about it.

A doctor was called next, who certified that he had examined the bullet wound and that it was sufficient to cause immediate death, and that in his opinion it did cause the death of Brian Levering.

A hotel employee testified that the horse found grazing by the trail was the same one which the deceased had ridden away from the hotel in company with the prisoner. The owner also identified it.

The brother of Brian Levering was called. He was worn and sad-looking. His blue Irish eyes were dulled by many wakeful hours. There were tears there, too, when he described their last night together at the hotel. But his voice was stern and steady when he identified

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

the fateful bill, pasted together with a strip of pale pink tissue paper. He could not possibly be mistaken, because he had pasted it together himself rather than take the trouble of sending it to the Treasury. The tissue paper had been wrapped around a small box of quinine pills when it came from the drug store. He had given the bill to his brother on that last night. He told the issue and the denomination.

It was late in the afternoon before the Government called Robert Bent. Robert Bent called by the Government! The irony of it! Locke gritted his teeth and resisted with difficulty an impulse to swear out loud. The old man told of the prisoner's arrival at his place with the young officer about sundown, one evening in late July or early August, he could n't rightly remember which. He was somewhat loquacious in his recital, but many people of failing memory are. It was not unusual. Neither the prisoner nor his companion had been particularly communicative on that occasion. They ate a light supper and started out together. The soldier fellow had said something about having to go on and the prisoner had said he'd show him the way. He had come back after a little while, the prisoner had, and had gone to bed in the corner. He had seemed a surly chap. He had not condescended to give any information about his intentions or his past doings. He was too uppish to sleep in a plain but clean bed, gentlemen, or maybe he thought to sleep on his saddle to be all ready if —"

"Your Honor," cut in the crisp tones of the junior

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

member for the defence, "we do not care anything about this witness's fairy tales."

"You are right," said the judge. "The witness will confine himself to facts, and not attempt to argue the case."

"Mr. Bent," said the prosecuting attorney, "were the prisoner and the young lieutenant the only guests you had that night?"

"No, Peter Dorsey was there a short time but he did n't stay long."

"Mr. Bent, did you ever see this before?" asked the lawyer tendering him the bill, marked "Exhibit A."

"Not that I remember of," said Bob Bent, with a vacant stare, as if he beheld something so extraordinarily new and uncomprehendable as to be a very phenomenon.

"Mr. Bent," asked Sampson, when his turn came, "you received a bank note from Peter Dorsey that night to settle his score; you did not look at it especially to see if it differed from thousands of others — you had no reason for doing that — but you remember receiving a bill, don't you?"

"I don't remember."

"But you might have received a bill?"

"I don't remember."

"Oil your memory machine a little, Mr. Bent, if you please. Now did you or did you not receive a bill from Peter Dorsey that night when he called so late for a lunch?"

"It seems to me I would have remembered it if I had,"

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

said the old man, shaking his head. "I always make a habit of examining any money I take in — leastwise bills. I'm too poor a man to risk counterfeits."

"It would be the first thing I ever knew you to remember if you had," said Mr. Sampson, exasperated. "However, you don't deny that you might have received a bill from Peter Dorsey — he was in a great hurry — he pulled out a roll of bills — ripped off the top one and threw it down — he might have done that, Mr. Bent, he *might* have?"

"I don't remember ever receiving such a bill."

"I did n't say such a bill. I said *a* bill. You might have received *a* bill, might you not? You received a bill from Locke Raynor, did you not?"

"I don't remember."

"Was it a silver dollar you received from Peter Dorsey?"

"The witness says he does n't remember what money or moneys Mr. Dorsey paid down, any more than he remembers what the prisoner paid," interrupted the prosecution, impatiently.

"Was it a silver dollar?" asked Sampson, serenely.

"I don't remember."

"You know there are n't many silver dollars in circulation," urged the junior member. "They are real novelties out this way. Would n't you be apt to remember a silver dollar if you had received one?"

"I don't remember nothin' about it," said the witness, sullenly.

"But you are not saying it *was* n't a bill?"

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Yes, I am. I never received a bill from Peter Dorsey," said the old man, unexpectedly. His eyes, which had been wandering, came home again, and he made his denial with a strange earnestness.

"Oh, then it was a silver dollar?" cried Sampson, quickly.

"I did n't say it was," retorted the old man.

"Then it was n't?"

"I don't remember."

"But you remember giving Mr. Raynor change when he settled his bill in the morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much was it?"

"I don't remember."

"Did n't you put it down on the book?"

"I don't keep no books."

"Was it bills or silver?"

"I don't remember."

"Your memory is n't very good, is it?"

"Pretty good."

"You don't remember anything except what you think Peter Dorsey wants you to remember; is that it?"

"I am testifying to what I know and nothin' more. Peter Dorsey hain't got nothin' to do with it."

So the day ended and there was another night in prison. It was a wild, blustering night, like March come too soon. The cell of the county jail was but dimly lighted and was gloomy and musty.

"You are like an Indian, Hunt," said Locke, as his friend rose to go. Because of his cloth, the Missionary

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

was allowed to visit the accused man every evening after the day's trial. "Here to-day — there to-morrow. You must be an excellent runner. How do you manage to cover so much ground in so short a time? I did not dream that you could get here for the trial. It was good of you to come."

"I have been told that I make a better Indian than a white man," said Hugh, with his quiet smile. "It would be strange if, after all these years, I had not learned something from them."

"But how can you leave your school and your church for so long?" persisted Locke. He could not bear that his friend should go. The nights were very long indeed. "You are called the Apostle to the Indians."

"Are we not sent to preach the gospel to all nations?" said the Missionary, gently.

"How goes your prayer? — for all those who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity? Yes, I am all of that. It was good of you to come, Hugh. I shall not forget it."

"Keep up a good heart, Mr. Raynor."

"I shall be the better able for your presence."

"Mr. Sampson thinks he can tangle Peter Dorsey all up to-morrow. These braggadocio fellows are usually easy marks."

"They can always forget," said Locke, with the glimmer of a smile.

"There is always danger of their forgetting too much."

"I was surprised to see Miss Mendenhall in the court

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

room to-day. Her father should not have allowed her to come — neither of the ladies. Such a journey at this time of year is extremely unwise."

"She seems none the worse for it, however. Mrs. Mendenhall would not permit her to come unchaperoned — poor lady."

"Why was she so set on coming?" asked Locke, with a keen glance.

"I think because the hearts of all of us at the Agency, Mr. Raynor, are here in this town with you."

"Especially the heart of the Special Inspector," said Locke, bitterly. Pride would not let him confess that Katharine had not spoken to him or even seemed to know him, but appeared rather to want to forget that she ever knew one so prison-branded.

"He is not of the Agency. He is not one of us," said Hugh Hunt.

Peter Dorsey took the stand early on the following morning. He seemed in very good spirits. He surveyed the vast crowd down in front with frank curiosity. The court room was crowded almost to suffocation. The gay little capital city, steamboat made, was at the height of its gala period. The town itself was crowded. Although the Territorial Legislature had just adjourned, there were many of its members, and a big following of those interested in seeing the wheels of government go round, still lingering. There were curious visitors from the East who had come to see how things were done in the land of the savage. There were adventurers of both sexes. There were traders and con-

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

tractors and Government employees of all grades and descriptions. There was a sprinkling of far-seeing mining outfitters who, having come to the Gateway, elected to abide their time, confident that the way would be opened some time. There were army officers, and steamboat crews wintering here, and only waiting for Spring to unlock their ice-bound boats. Many vessels were hauled up into Winter quarters, for the upper river trade was such now as to demand closer markets than St. Louis, and the new railroad to Yankton helped that town wonderfully to become a steamboat centre. So the little city was laughing and dancing and making merry in its fever of young excitement, and everything passed muster, from a game of poker or a wine supper to a trial for murder. Thus was the court room crowded on those fateful days in February.

Peter Dorsey was surprisingly modest as a witness. He kept his temper, to the real astonishment of all who knew him. It made a good impression. There were some, however, who thought he had been well-trained by the new blood in the prosecution. Through the influence of the commanding officer of Brian Levering's regiment, a famous firm of Chicago lawyers had come out to help the Government. They were middle-aged men, mature in experience, deeply learned in the technicalities of the law, and knowing human nature so well that they were accounted the best jury attorneys in the Northwest.

"Where were you on the afternoon of July thirty-first last, Mr. Dorsey?"

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"On the trail going south — about a mile north of old Bob Bent's road-house," said Peter, easily.

"Where were you going?"

"To Yankton."

"Were you alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you meet any one?"

"No, sir."

"Did you see any one?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may tell the jury who this person was."

"The prisoner, Locke Raynor."

"Where was he when you saw him?"

"Off the trail about half a mile, riding in a diagonal line from the bluffs back toward the trail."

He then proceeded to tell, after adroit questioning, why he recognized the man so unmistakably. He knew the prisoner's build, his mannerisms in riding, his riding clothes, his horse. The man was Locke Raynor. No one else. He wore a broad-brimmed white felt hat pulled low over his eyes. He rode a dark bay horse.

The testimony regarding the hat and the horse coincided exactly with that of the road-house keeper as to the hat worn and the horse ridden when the prisoner came first to the house in company with the Lieutenant as his supper guest and afterwards when he returned from seeing the young despatch-bearer well into the Big Bend trail. It all sounded pretty bad, but there was the prisoner's own story yet to come, and young Sampson was a fighter. He had learned how to fight at

A MAN WITH A POOR MEMORY

Pea Ridge, and how to hang on at the Siege of Vicksburg. No one left the court room who was not obliged to by the press of unavoidable engagements. The interest was too intense.

"What time did you say it was, Mr. Dorsey, when you came to the road-house?" Mr. Sampson's questions were crowding one upon another, quick, hot, stinging, like rolling clouds of steam from the spout of a teakettle.

"Oh, about midnight, I reckon."

"Don't you *remember*?" There was a biting sarcasm in the word.

"Yes, I do!" snapped Peter. He was losing his fine temper. "It was five minutes to twelve, to be exact — since you are so particular."

"You looked at your watch?"

"I did."

"And it was exactly five minutes to twelve?"

"I said so, did n't I?"

"Now, Mr. Dorsey, you testified a little while ago that it was about sundown when you saw Mr. Raynor riding a little off the trail. You were going south. It was, as you said, about a mile north of the road-house. You arrived at the road-house at exactly five minutes till twelve. *Now, where* were you in the meantime?"

"I —" Was the question unexpected? The witness hesitated just a moment; then he continued, "I stopped at an Indian encampment which I ran into a little ways ahead. They were camping close to the trail and I stayed with them until way on into the night."

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

I was trying to make a horse trade but the cusses wanted to cheat me, so finally I went on with my own horse."

With the coming of night again, the Government rested.

CHAPTER XVII

"YOU HAVE HAD A PRETTY DREAM"

TWO things occurred on the last day of that trial which made it long remembered. The first incident, although not so sensational as the last, was noteworthy in that, while to the superficial observer it was merely so unusual as to gratify the lust of humanity for new excitement, it went far deeper than that to the thoughtful, and showed as unerringly as a compass points the direction, what influence, of all the various influences rampant in the Indian country — military, political, financial; the influence of the soldier, of politician, of trader; of fear, selfishness, and greed; and of the quiet, selfless, unassuming, fearless and fear-taking-away, loving influence of the White Robe — what influence of all these was making most for the regeneration of the Sioux.

It was just as Locke Raynor was taking the chair in his own defence that the door opened to admit a strange-looking man. He was tall, lean, commanding. His chin was up. He was blanketed, and there was a single feather in his straggling black hair. Where his robe fell away from his chest, there was disclosed, partially, a gay jacket of very finely cured deerskin, most elab-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

orately decorated with designs worked in colored beads and porcupine quills. Running Bird had discarded all pretence of dressing like the whites since he had taken to the wilderness; and he was arrayed in his best because he did not care to be an object of scorn to the conceited usurpers of the kingdom of his allies — the Yanktons — who had been long since pushed up the river to make way for the proud sun race. His piercing eyes surveyed calmly, with a touch of disdain, the packed mass of sombrously clad white men with its sprinkling of more gayly dressed white squaws. People near him stared curiously at this unexpected appearance of an aboriginal, direct from the hostile country. He was not a peaceful Yankton — that was plain enough to connoisseurs in tribal distinctions. What was his business? It was a far cry from that great unblazed western wilderness to the gay little capital city at the forks of the two big rivers. The newcomer continued to gaze about him for a minute or two, standing motionless at the door, and then suddenly strode soundlessly down the middle aisle. He did not hesitate on the way forward, but many shrank back, nervously, as he passed them. When he had come to the Agency group, he stopped and waited. Stolid and indifferent, he stood, as if all this sea of faces did not exist. Then people saw the young Missionary with the rapt countenance (whom many had come to remember because he was always there and because of his manifest friendship for the accused, and because, too, of the beautiful sunny-haired young woman who was always sitting by him),

‘ ‘ A P R E T T Y D R E A M ’ ’

rise quickly, pass out into the aisle, and follow the Indian, who turned as soon as he perceived that the Missionary had observed him, and was stalking out of the room without once having spoken to any one. When the door closed upon the two, people with a long breath turned again to the business in hand.

They strained forward the better to see the prisoner. They had waited long for this moment. He was a handsome young fellow, and commanded interest on that account, as well as for his undefinable air of better breeding than had many of the men who took employment at agency and trading post in that early day. The United States Marshal had stayed for this moment, too. He liked Locke, but he was an incorruptible public officer.

“ You may state your name,” said Mr. Sampson.

“ Locke Raynor Crawford,” said Locke, quietly.

The Marshal started. He was genuinely surprised. The handkerchief in his inner pocket was not needed, then, to try to shake belief in the prisoner’s veracity. He was at least not perjuring himself in the very beginning. There was a hint of a quizzical smile in Locke’s eyes as he glanced for the fraction of a second in the Marshal’s direction. If any one had been looking at Special Inspector Warlick, he would have seen that his face turned absolutely livid at the quiet announcement. Down in front, the name meant nothing to a girl who had long realized that she did not know this man’s whole name; but oh, how fervently she had hoped that knowledge of his past and present connections might be brought to light at this inquisition which

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

would overbalance the weight of circumstantial evidence already recorded against him. She was keenly disappointed, for she had hoped against hope that the name, when revealed, would be one to conjure with. She had not spoken to him or visited him in prison — she had not even nodded to him across the intervening space since her arrival in the city. He — prison-branded — was as far removed from her as were the stars in their fixed courses. He must never come back to the Agency. But as one she had known and liked in the old days — so long had those six months been that it already seemed like the old days — she longed and prayed for his acquittal. This accomplished, they would wave a cordial farewell, smile, and each would go his own way forevermore.

“That is not the full name recorded at the Agency?”

“No, sir.”

“Will you explain why you let it be understood that your name was simply Locke Raynor?”

“I was not asked to tell my name, and Locke Raynor is the name I have gone by since I have been out here. It is my baptismal name.”

“Please state your age and occupation.”

“I am twenty-eight years old, and I was employed at Big Bend Agency as issue clerk when I was arrested.”

“When did you come to this Territory?”

“In July last.”

“Prior to that where did you live?”

“In New York most of the time. In Washington part of the time.”

‘ ‘ A P R E T T Y D R E A M ’ ’

Mr. Sampson had been warned of the futility of trying to strengthen his defence by delving into the past of the prisoner. He was afraid his stubborn client would spoil the case by refusing to answer, so he proceeded to call upon Locke to tell the story of his movements on the day of the murder in his own words. Locke told it simply and straightforwardly, but it was evident that he had lost caste with the crowd by reason of the deception concerning his name. Doubtless he had good cause for hiding his identity when he came to bury it in the Indian country. Dire might have been his crimes, and people's imaginations were immediately set to working over-time. He could not even remember from what source he had received the bill. He knew that he had received a bill in change from Bob Bent but he had not noticed whether it was bound together with pink tissue paper or not. Pretty flimsy evidence! He told of Peter Dorsey's late arrival at the inn and of his scowling recognition of Locke.

“Yes, I wore a white felt hat,” he continued. “I was using it to soften my saddle pillow. I had put my horse in the barn.”

The inference was plain. If the prisoner was speaking the truth, it would have been very easy for Peter Dorsey to know what was the color of his hat and of his horse. But the Chicago lawyers were keen on cross examination, too, and pitiless.

“Your ways did not separate at American Creek Crossing. Brian Levering was bound for Fort Lincoln with despatches. The trail leads through Big Bend

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Agency. Now, Mr. Crawford, will you tell me why you did not continue with the young man? You were keen for his company out of Yankton — as he told his brother Michael. Why did you stop and he go on?”

“Because I wanted to ascertain if the whiskey smugglers — the Dorsey gang — had really quit the country or were still connected with the road-house,” answered Locke, deliberately. “Brian wanted to travel by night and save time. He would not wait. I decided to stay and investigate the situation. So we parted.”

“You mean you left the road-house together and that you returned *alone*, and that the next day Brian Levering was found foully murdered not a half mile from the trail you rode together. Why did you start out with him?”

“To show him the way and to wish him God-speed.”

Major Mendenhall testified to the excellent service the accused had given while an employee of the Government, and of the good reputation he had always borne at the Agency. So did Hugh Hunt, who had long since returned to the court room. But as neither had known Locke long, their testimony could not have much weight. And then Sampson sprang a surprise on the prisoner.

“We will call Katharine Mendenhall,” he said, in a loud, clear voice.

She was trembling slightly, but no one realized it, and her voice could be heard in all parts of the room, so quiet had it become. She had removed her coat, but her dark fur cap still rested lightly on her mass of

‘ ‘ A P R E T T Y D R E A M ’ ’

shining hair. She did not have much to say, but she told in a calm, impassionate manner of the upright character the accused had always made manifest since she had known him. The junior member had reasoned well when he counted on her beauty and daintiness to gain sympathy for the prisoner. As for Locke, after one great heart-bound of joy at her unexpected appearance in his behalf, he soon became despondent again, accounting her action as the result of pressure brought to bear by her father and the Missionary. She was not cross-examined. As she stepped down, Hugh Hunt touched Mr. Sampson on the shoulder and whispered to him. The lawyer's face lighted and he nodded in a pleased way.

“ We will call Black Tomahawk, a Chief of the Yanktonais,” he said, and then the strange visitation of an earlier hour was remembered.

It was not that visitor who took the witness chair, however, as many expected. Two men followed the Missionary from an anteroom. One of them was an old man, and he it was who took the chair, while the younger assumed his post as interpreter. Black Tomahawk did not seem cognizant of the vast concourse of people about him. He had a placid, introspective look, and sat stolidly upon his chair, with his shoulders slouched forward, and paid not the slightest attention to any one or anything — seemingly. It was as if he were deaf and blind and mute, as far as any outward show of consciousness of the presence of others was concerned. He was in no haste to answer questions. When

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Running Bird repeated to him in Dakota the lawyer's first interrogation, it was as if he had not heard it. He continued gazing absent-mindedly. The lawyer repeated his question, but Running Bird did not repeat his interpretation. It was not necessary. Black Tomahawk had heard and presently he answered. Thus, little by little, his testimony was drawn from the old Chief. He had been persuaded by Running Bird who, sore of heart because of the influence that was keeping his lodge empty, still had accomplished this righteousness for Hugh Hunt's sake, and, yes, who knows, perhaps for the sake of the man who did not cry out. He had been camping out in the bluffs, but not so near the trail as Peter Dorsey had said. Peter Dorsey had not visited his camp at all. There had been no horse trade nor attempt at a horse trade, because no one had visited his camp. But he had seen a man riding a quarter of a mile from the trail in the vicinity of the place where the murdered man was afterwards found. The man wore a slouchy looking black hat and rode a gray horse. He had thought at the time that the man was Peter Dorsey. Yes, he had seen Peter Dorsey many times. He was quite, quite sure the man was Peter Dorsey. Peter Dorsey had often sold whiskey to Black Tomahawk's young men. He remembered him well. The man he saw wore a black slouch hat and rode a gray horse.

When the metropolitan lawyer began his cross examination, he began confidently, even buoyantly. He was troubled with not the slightest doubt as to his ability to tear the old Chief's testimony to shreds.

' A P R E T T Y D R E A M ' '

What a travesty to pit aboriginal ignorance and mind limitations against the cultured mentality of ages! He questioned him rigidly as to his identification of the man. He soon learned that rapid-fire questions would not avail. Black Tomahawk was not to be hurried or confused, and Running Bird was a deliberate interpreter. After a rather unsatisfactory attempt to tangle the witness, the lawyer asked:

"Now, Mr. Black Tomahawk, is n't it a fact that you have become a little confused in regard to colors, and instead of the man's wearing a black hat and riding a gray horse, he wore a white hat and rode a dark colored horse? And is n't it also a fact that twilight was beginning to settle among the hills, and at the distance you were from him, it was impossible for you to form an idea as to his identity?"

Black Tomahawk's countenance was imperturbable, as unresponsive as that of a bronze cast. His eyes were seemingly thousands of miles away from the crowded court room, and his impatient interlocutor. Presently, he said something in an indifferent tone of voice, as if it were not at all in answer to anything the lawyer might have said, but as if he were communing with himself.

"He does not answer your question," said Running Bird.

"Well, what does he say?" asked the lawyer, impatiently.

"He says you have had a pretty dream."

The arguments were long and heated. The prosecution made a strong case out of the bill pasted with its

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

fateful trifle of pink tissue paper, the prisoner's going out with Brian Levering and returning alone, and all of Peter Dorsey's damaging testimony. He bitterly impeached the trumped-up story of Black Tomahawk, and implored the jury not to weigh a respectable, God-fearing white man's sacred word on oath against that of an ignorant, unreliable Indian—one of a race of proverbial liars who had no conception of the meaning of the term *sacred oath*, but who had an insatiable greed for notoriety. There were few dry eyes in the court room when he pictured the young patriot riding so cheerily and so unconsciously into the sunset—death. He dwelt upon the awfulness of the sacrifice—a clean, noble, upright, patriotic boy, whom his country needed, foully shot in the back by a black-hearted coward, whom the East had spit out for his criminal worthlessness, and who had slunk hither under an assumed name to evade the sleuth hounds of an indignant justice. If the prisoner was not in hiding, why did not some of his friends come out of the East in his behalf?

Sampson fought hard for Locke. He in turn scathingly impeached the testimony of a man who made a business of selling forbidden whiskey to the Indians, and of the bought or fear-struck craven road-house keeper. He spoke feelingly of the tried patriotism and loyalty of their country's red children, and dwelt reverently upon the divine influence of the White Robe which had led Running Bird and Black Tomahawk, absolutely unsolicited, because none knew of the old

‘ ‘ A P R E T T Y D R E A M ’ ’

Chief's presence on the fateful ground that never-to-be-forgotten Summer evening, to journey over two hundred miles of rough roads in the dead of Winter to speak the truth. He made much of the testimony of men of such known integrity as the Missionary and Major Mendenhall, and of the fearless stand for the right made by the Major's beautiful, refined, and high-principled daughter.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when the jury went out. Shortly after supper, the Major stepped into Katharine's room at the hotel and told her that the jury had agreed. He had promised her that she should be informed immediately when an agreement was reached. It was her wish to return and hear the verdict. She turned deathly pale, but rose at once.

"So soon?" she asked, in a smothered voice.

"It is a good sign," said the Major, cheerily. "It is not so easy as that to hang a man."

Mrs. Mendenhall pleaded to be left. She had had enough of courts. She was ready to fly to pieces right this minute from sheer nervousness. So Katharine and her father left her and ploughed back to the big dark brick pile which was the court house.

The officers were searching for the clerk when they arrived. He could not be found. The jury filed in and took their places, silently. The defendant was brought in and seated by his attorneys. He looked calm and indifferent. The suspense was terrible. An awful silence pervaded the room, which was again well filled to hear the verdict, rumor having said that it was ready. It

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

seemed eerie that so many people could for so long maintain so ghostly a stillness. The lamps in their brackets on the wall flared dimly. One on the attorneys' table smoked dismally until the chimney was blurred with a gloomy murk. Some one reached out a hand and turned down the wick and his hand cast a gigantic shadow on the wall. Somewhere a clock ticked loudly. A charred log fell in the stove and a woman cried out nervously at the sound. Where was the clerk? Outside, the wind was blowing a February gale, and it moaned drearily around the corners of the building. It was full fifteen minutes before the clerk made his belated appearance. To many, the time had seemed hours.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?" asked the judge.

"We have, Your Honor," said the foreman.

"You may announce your verdict."

"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree, and recommend the death sentence."

It was then the second event took place which made this trial so long and so especially remembered. There was a heartrending scream and a woman sprang to her feet, a young woman with fair hair and death in her eyes. In a second's time she was speeding up the aisle toward the prisoner's table. Locke leaped to his feet to meet her. Instantly, there was the wildest confusion. Chairs were overturned promiscuously in the excitement. The officers of the court rushed forward to prevent the escape of the man found guilty. They

had no other thought than that he was taking this chance for a rush for his liberty. In the surge, Katharine was knocked down. With blazing eyes and flushed cheeks, Locke sprang over the railing and struck out right and left with a mighty strength. Men fell like dead weights at the impact of his skilled muscles. No one seemed able to lay a hand upon him. The whole body of the court room was on its feet, a wild, surging, shouting mob of people.

At last Sampson managed to worm his way through the squirming mass to the side of the enraged man.

“For God’s sake, Raynor, quiet down! Don’t do anything rash now! We’ll get you a new trial and have you out of this yet. Sit down! You are ruining your chances. Sit down, man, for God’s sake!”

“I am not trying to escape, Mr. Sampson,” cried Locke, in a loud voice, “but they must keep off that girl! Look at them! They are trampling her to death!”

He struck out again with telling force, made his way to the crumpled heap of white-faced girl on the floor, lifted her in his arms, leaped upon the platform and stood thus separated from the surging, panic-stricken mass of people, still holding the unconscious girl in his arms.

The time was not yet when men would seriously consider the word of an Indian as against that of a white man, in all equity, no matter how honorable the one or how debased the other.

CHAPTER XVIII

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

THE two weeks following the tragic close of the trial seemed the longest that Locke had ever lived through. They took Katharine from him that night — her frantic father and the Missionary — none others, for he stood at bay against all until they came. After they had taken her from his arms, he offered no more resistance. There was nothing else to fight for; but oh, his arms felt empty, empty! What unmitigated idiocy those foolish, panting, hysterical officers displayed when they finally threw themselves upon him — a full half-dozen of them — battling as if their very lives depended upon overpowering him that minute. He laughed in their faces when they slipped handcuffs upon his wrists, all the while grasping him as if it took the strength of all six to hold him. The situation deserved the laugh. He was wax in their hands. He was making not the least trouble. Why should he strike out then? She was safe. There was nothing else to do but to go back to his cell and wait. He had not seen anything in a long, long time so amusing as those flushed, excited, determined faces, as he was clutched and mauled and half crushed by the weight of the many

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

who were so desperately anxious to manacle the one, and him defenceless and as willing to be bound and led away out of the turmoil as they were to have him. He did not care for anything after Katharine had been taken from him. But they acted as if he were a maniac who laughed at strait-jackets or a desperado armed to the teeth. No wonder he laughed. He laughed again now in thinking about it.

They had taken his mate from him. He had recognized his mate the moment she cried out in distress. Did she know him now as he knew her? His heart had been in his answering cry. He had tried to tell her. But they had taken her away and now he could never know. He had hoped that she would look up and perhaps smile before the door closed behind her forever. He should have known then. But she had not done either thing. She had only lain white and quiet against her father's shoulder as he bore her from the room. So he should never know. Over and over again during those long days he had wished that she had smiled. Death — it was nothing if she had only smiled. Death? To be sure, and why not? It had to be faced. Of course Sampson had moved for a new trial and it had been granted; but that did not mean much. It was easy to obtain a new trial in a murder case. It would not help him to see Katharine. They would never let her come again. She had probably already been spirited back to that East which had cradled them both. He was in absolute ignorance of the movements of the Agency party after the door had closed upon them.

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

Even Hugh Hunt had not been to see him after the first day of his reincarceration. He might have gone East, too. They all did go back sooner or later — these pious-faced, preaching chaps — whenever a good opportunity to get out gracefully presented itself; and then they spent the rest of their days in manufacturing new doses of moral suasion to induce other misguided people to go out and continue the work which they themselves had so gloriously instituted. This man had seemed different; but if Katharine went, the provocation would be great — and it was a God-forsaken country, this, where men were hanged for other men's holiday.

There was the jailer again. Was it morning then — or — noon — or night? Had he just breakfasted or lunched or dined? He could not remember. But if a meal were coming, he could not have done any one of the three; and yet it seemed as if he had just eaten. Where, then, had the time gone? Time was all so unmarked here. It was not the jailer after all, however, but the sheriff, and Locke glanced up with a show of interest in his usually indifferent expression. The sheriff was a good fellow, and his presence was a happy relief from the dull companionship of the jailer.

"It ain't Spring yet by a long shot," was the sheriff's greeting, as he felt gingerly of his ears to make sure that they were not frozen.

"Winter or Summer — it's all alike to me," replied Locke, listlessly.

"Lost your grit?" asked the sheriff, with a keen look. "You ain't got as much spunk as a rabbit."

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

"I'm afraid I just don't care," said Locke, with a smile.

"Sampson's workin' like the devil. He'll get you out if anybody can. It's funny how things work out. He was plumb crazy that night, he was so dead sure you were knockin' out the underpins of your chances for a new trial; and now here he is makin' capital by the gallon, or by the bankful, whichever expression suits you best, out of that very grand-stand play of yours. The way things finally did turn out, I reckon you and she made more friends than you lost by that little fracas, all right," and the sheriff grinned in a very friendly manner, only to become the next moment as gloomy as he had been beaming before. Locke was so absorbed in his own thoughts, however, that he did not notice the quick transition.

"Where is Major Mendenhall?" he asked, without circumlocution. He was determined to know the worst at once. He should wonder no longer.

"Up to Big Bend," said the sheriff, the gloom on his face deepening.

"When did he return?"

"A day or two after the trial—I don't just remember when."

"His family accompanied him of course?"

"Of course—more's the pity."

"Why—what do you mean?" demanded Locke, quickly.

"Nothing. I did n't mean anything really," said the sheriff, a little hurriedly. "But it's such a long hard

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

trip for gentlewomen. They must have been just about worn out."

"Tell me — is Miss Mendenhall ill?" asked Locke, insistently. "You might as well tell me, Mr. Oliver. I *will* know."

"I don't think I ought to tell you — honest," pleaded the sheriff. "It was a slip. I did n't mean to. You can't do anything, and it will just worry you for nothing."

"She took cold on the journey and has pneumonia or worse?" persisted Locke, steadily.

"No, she ain't sick — leastways I trust she ain't," said the sheriff, with stammering hesitation.

"What is it then?"

"Well, you see," the sheriff was desperate and saw no other way out of the difficulty than by telling the perfect truth, "we just got word from the Agency a little while ago and — and —"

"Yes, and —" prompted Locke, though his heart was hammering away so violently it seemed as if he must choke presently, and he found himself wondering what he would do if Stephen Oliver told him that she was dead.

"And she — the Agent's girl, you know — well, they don't know where she is — that's all. She's showed up missing. It seems she went out a-horseback a few days ago — said she was goin' to see a young Injun who was dyin' with consumption. She never came back. Yes, she went to that Injun's tipi all right. His father and mother both saw her. But they did n't

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

know anything more than that she had started for home after visitin' awhile and leavin' some things. They're thrashin' out two notions up there to the Agency, it seems. One is that she and her horse got into the river somehow — an airhole probably — or else that she's been took by a band of hostiles. I don't take to either notion much. It seems there were n't no airholes anywheres near, and there was n't ary sign of rotten ice either. If she's in the river, it's because she left the trail; and why should she have done that with it gettin' so late and settin' in to storm, too? I don't put a bit of stock in the Injun scare neither. The Little Yanktons set a heap of store by the big-necked Agent of theirs, I'm told; and as for the hostiles — what would those damned Tetons be skulkin' around the Agency for? They don't deserve anything from the Government, and they know it, and keep to their own side of the river. They would n't dare steal a white girl right from under the very nose of the United States military. That idea's nonsense — plumb nonsense. It beats the devil and the Dutch what peculiar notions some misinformed folks do hug to themselves as to the power and daring of that handful of prowling, dirty, cowardly sneaks. We can dismiss that premise as absolutely preposterous. There ain't a bigger coward in the world than an Injun coward."

"I don't know," said Locke, slowly, putting a prison-whitened hand to his forehead to brush away the rags of mist that had seemed to flutter before his brain ever since that first terrible announcement. "I have heard

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

— some one told me — it was Hugh Hunt, I think — that many of the hostiles — especially the unsettled Brules — hang around the vicinity of the several Agencies during the Winter, sometimes accepting rations from the too good-natured Agents, more often as parasites living off the bounty of their friends. But it is too horrible. I could not bear that. My God! Not that!”

“I don’t think you ’ll have to,” said the sheriff, with a consolatory shake of the head. “That’s the last place in the world I’d look for her. Now, this is my guess. I ’low she ain’t been quite the same since that break-down in the court room you know and I’ll bet you she just up and breaks away from the whole blamed business and hits the trail for that old home o’ hern back in the States. Yes, sir. Next thing we’ll hear from that quarter is that she has arrived safe, and please will her ma hurry home ’cause she ’s lonesome. I’ll bet you the Major’s never thought of that. It’s too simple. I believe I’ll send him a hint.”

“Oliver,” cried Locke, suddenly and sharply, “I must get out of here at once!”

“Good! I wish you could. How you goin’ to work it, son?” asked the sheriff, with sympathetic good-nature.

“I must be bailed out at once. You must see to it without an instant’s delay. Telegraph to —”

“Too bad, son,” interrupted Stephen Oliver, “but you know you ain’t in here for aailable offence.”

“True! My God, true!” and down went the brown

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

head upon a pair of stalwart arms in an utter abandonment of despair. Not for anything else under the sun but for Katharine's sake would he have asked for help, and now it was too late.

"Don't take it so hard," urged the sheriff. "As I said before, I can fairly see that little minx a-swingin' on the gate back there and a-laughin' up her sleeve fit to kill at all this hubbub she's set a-goin'."

Locke looked up. His eyes were clear and steady once more. The paroxysm of despair had passed.

"You will let me out to-night," he said, with such convincing finality that for a moment the sheriff found himself supposing that of course he would, since Locke seemed to know so well that he would, "and I will give you my word of honor—I am a gentleman, Stephen Oliver, you know that, don't you?—that I will come back to jail just as soon as ever I have discovered what has happened to Miss Mendenhall. I will come back. You have my word."

"Aw, come off now, sonny, you know I can't do anything like that," said the sheriff, miserably. "I ain't got any authority to do anything like that, and you know it. Go easy on a fellow, can't you? I'm sorry enough as it is."

"Do you doubt that I would keep my word?"

"No, I actually believe you'd be damned fool enough to come back; but that don't let me out. Shut up now like a good fellow. I've got to go. And don't you be pesterin' yourself 'cause you can't get out. You can't help it and I can't help it, so what's the use of

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

botherin'? Besides, she 's got regiments of friends, and I reckon they ain't a goin' to leave nothin' undone."

"Then you refuse to let me out on parole?"

"I do," snapped the sheriff, wearying of the useless importunity.

When he had gone, Locke sat down to think it all out clearly. There was good reason for the sudden passing of his despair. It had come to him all at once — this determination to escape. It had clarified his brain and steadied his thought. It was an inspiration, and he would ever hold his eyes to the light of it until the end should be accomplished. Such a thought had never entered his mind before. He had not wished to escape before. Freedom without honor would be but a brackish draught with no joy of life in it. But now he would escape from this hated place. No power on earth could stay him. He had no more doubt of it than he had of finding Katharine once he was out. Of course he would find Katharine. No one loved her as he loved her. Who, then, would press the fight for her as he would? No one was as strong to endure physical hardship as he was. Who, then, so logically the one to lead forced marches? The military? He laughed aloud — though softly. A million men with colors flying, rifles gleaming, horses prancing, and bands playing might march from Big Bend to the Rocky Mountains and back again and then take up the march from the Platte, face north, and tramp and tramp and tramp until they must salute the flag of a queen, and yet never see a Sioux. He had modified his views of

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

the efficiency of the military in Indian warfare since his residence in the Indian's own country. But he would find Katharine—if she were alive. He never doubted it. He would come back then and they could do with him as they would. He was in honor bound.

Yes, he must escape this night—sooner if possible. The only question which remained to be settled, then, was—how? He calmly went over the whole situation in his mind. During the night and most of the day as well, he was confined in a steel cage; but the sheriff or the jailer usually let him out for a little rest to eat his meals in the main room. The jail was a one-story frame building about forty feet long by twenty wide. There was but one outside door, the front entrance. This door led into a small vestibule, from which a much heavier door opened into the jail room. Locke gazed thoughtfully at the windows and the walls. It was hopeless to count on any help from them. Even suppose that he should be fortunate enough to rid himself of the presence of the jailer for a considerable length of time, what then? If only he might manage somehow to overpower the man and take the key from him! But that was not a promising prospect either. The man was always well-armed and took a fiendish delight in being ever on the alert. It was almost noon, and he must think fast. If he could only perfect a plan before the jailer came with his dinner! He must—for Katharine's sake. Why, she was his mate—the one woman in all the world for him. What if they could never come together? Was she any the less his because

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

of this cruel turn of fortune's wheel? She was his and perhaps in some fairer world—one of those star worlds, it might be, which had gleamed so radiantly in a soft Summer sky on the first night of a journey he and she had begun as strangers faring together only to lighten a long way to a common destination by companionship! Why, he was becoming as visionary a dreamer as ever the Missionary could be in his maddest moments. To work, Locke Raynor Crawford, to work now! There will be time enough for dreams by and by.

The jailer was approaching. Locke's face was placidly indifferent. The man placed the dinner basket upon a small table standing outside the cage, unlocked the door, and Locke stepped out with a yawn. He stretched himself with a luxurious sense of comfort in an enlarged environment.

"I think it is certainly a criminal act to cramp a fellow up in a box like that," he said. "I'm paralyzed with inaction." He was walking about as he spoke, slowly but enjoyingly, occasionally striking out with his fists just to renew life in his muscles. The jailer had moved toward the door.

"Working up an appetite?" he asked.

"Trying to," replied Locke, increasing his stride a trifle. "When a fellow has nothing to look forward to all day long but his meals, he surely has need to relish them. Is it the same old thing, or did you manage to smuggle in something eatable this time?" He sniffed toward the basket critically. "Is it possible that I smell a new smell?" he cried, interestedly, and

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

strode quickly toward the table. The water pail was sitting on the floor and as he swung past it, he swung a little too close and over it went.

"Deuce take my awkwardness!" he exclaimed, petulantly, with a rueful gaze at the overturned bucket. "I'd like to know what I am going to do now. I have been waiting hours for a drink." He stepped to the table and began discontentedly to examine the contents of the basket. "All sawdust without water. If that water slopped all over the floor is n't tantalizing!" He nibbled at a piece of bread and put it back with a wry face. "It simply chokes me. I have been thirsty all the morning, and then Mr. Oliver kept me talking so long besides that my throat is parched. I reckon you'll have to get some more, old man. I'm sorry to put you to the trouble, but I really can't eat a mouthful without something to drink."

"You don't seem to realize that it's nearly zero weather and the pump is away round the corner," grumbled the jailer.

"You are right — I did not," said Locke, quietly, and he turned wistful eyes to the blurred windows. "It was Summer when I came here. All the world was warm and sweet. One loses track in seven months. Forget that I asked you to go. I can wait until night."

He replaced the contents of the basket absent-mindedly and began his round of walking again.

"Why don't you eat your dinner?" asked the jailer, surlily, ashamed of being touched by the pathetic apology.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"It is not bread that is the staff of life," he said.

"It is water. One goes mad without it."

"Oh, I knew all the time I'd have to go," said the jailer, with gruff unwillingness. "Curse your awkwardness, I say. You don't deserve it, but a man has to eat, I reckon. If you were n't a sort of a good fellow, hardly ever askin' for anything, I'm blamed if I would n't let you go thirsty, and hungry, too, to pay you for kickin' that bucket over."

He picked up the bucket and shuffled out, turning the key very carefully on the outside of the door. Of course prisoners were not supposed to be allowed the freedom of the main jail-room for any length of time; but it was only common humanity to let them out long enough to stretch themselves once in a while, when the jailer was on hand to see that everything was all right. And was he not on hand to-day? The door was locked, the pump was only two blocks away, and it was broad noon besides.

Locke stepped quickly to the window and watched him. When the man had gone half a block, he turned the corner and was out of view. That was Locke's signal. He snatched the dinner knife from the basket, sprang to the cage and climbed rapidly toward the ceiling, smiling grimly to find that his muscles had not lost much yet from the disuse of which he had so bitterly complained. From the top of the cage, the ceiling was within easy working distance. He jabbed his knife into the plastering again and again until he had

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

made a hole sufficiently large to admit his hand. This much accomplished, he began tearing away lathing and plastering in such haste that his hands very soon were torn and bleeding, but he did not realize it. It was not long before he had an aperture large enough for him to climb through. He had to be very careful. There was no flooring and he was compelled to walk upon the joists. He had to be very quick, too, because it was cold and the jailer would not linger long at his task. The attic space was not partitioned off in any way but lay under the roof the entire length and breadth of the building. This was as he had thought and hoped it would be. The rest was easy if only he had calculated aright the time the jailer must consume in going, pumping his pail full, and returning. He walked quickly over the top of the partition wall underneath and stood above the vestibule. He kicked a hole through the lathing and plastering here and dexterously let himself down to the floor beneath. It had all taken but a few moments. He was very strong and his training had given him so superb a mastery over his movements that not a second had been wasted. It was a dangerous chance, but it was the only one; and he had not hesitated in taking it.

Having gained the floor of the vestibule, he ran to the side opposite the one from which the jailer would approach, raised the window and slipped out easily. No prisoner was ever permitted in the vestibule except under heavy guard, so the windows were not properly bolted and barred as were those of the jail room.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

There was no one in sight. It was the noon hour and cold besides. He had counted on that, but he was grateful to find it so. The river lay two or three blocks to the south. It must render him a hiding-place until the friendly dark should come to his aid. But he dared not run. That would have raised the hue and cry at once. His long, rapid strides, however, were a goodly substitute for running, and he soon reached the steep bank, firm in the belief that he had not yet been sighted. The river was extremely low — so low that a sand bar covered with a young but thick growth of willows lay between the bluffs and the ice of the main channel, which in that day hugged the Dakota shore. Safety by way of the river had come to him as a real but vaguely defined idea before ever he left the jail. Now it took form and substance and became a tangible thing. He cast one swift, backward glance, saw that the chase had not yet begun, and then slid down the steep bank, paying not the slightest attention to tears and cuts to clothes and flesh by briars and the dry, rasping clutch of other dead growths on the hillside.

When he had reached the bottom, he slipped a little way into the willow labyrinth so that he should be screened from view from the heights, and then made his way rapidly to the west. He had not yet taken time to realize that he was free. He was not free. He would not be free until he could seek Katharine without this man-hunt at his heels. But it would not be long now. When the dark came, he should be master of himself and of his actions once more. It was a

LOCKE OUTWITS THE JAILER

glorious thought. Now he had better go farther within the kindly shelter of the willows and lie quiet until night. He had need to be very still. He crept forward cautiously. He could no longer be sure about the chase. He was careful to break no slender twig to blaze his trail through the wilderness. After awhile, he stopped and lay down flat upon the ground, looking up at the blue sky, which gleamed away above the pliable, red-skinned, friendly willows. It was a long, long time since he had seen so much blue sky. It was not very cold down here. It was sheltered from any breeze from the north and west by the high bluff, and the sun was shining warmly upon that southern wall, and the pleasant warmth radiated therefrom all over the protected valley. He was not properly clad for a Winter's journey, but when the sun went down and it grew really cold, he could keep warm by keeping constantly on the move. It would be time for him to be up and doing then. The willows were so thick that they grew almost like slough grass. It would be next to impossible to find him unless some one stumbled upon him purely by chance, or unless a posse of many men thrashed through the entire bottom with systematic and stubborn integrity; and that would take time. It was very probable that the officers would surmise that he had taken to the willows, but they could not be sure, and that would weaken their purpose. They would be always thinking that he might have gone in another direction. He knew that his chances were good if he kept still.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

ing man's bed, and no one except only the Creator of us all could have fathomed the thoughts of that dark-skinned, taciturn — always taciturn in the presence of one of the alien and arrogant race of white men — aboriginal maid. She had been often to the mission school, hard and cruel as the Winter had been. She had heard of *Wakantanka* Who had sent His only Son to die for her brother and all Indians whether they were good or bad; but her brother was dying after all, and perhaps she was thinking that it was a very unnecessary thing to do, though a truly brave and admirable one — that dying upon the cross — because it could not keep any one from dying; and after death an Indian was all right, anyway. He went to a fair and full hunting-ground, and life was made very easy then for the good hunter and the brave warrior. For surely the sorrow and suffering, the sickness and the hunger, and all the ills of life were ample expiation paid to the Great Spirit for the gift of life, as well as for its abuses and crimes, for which the Indian fully realizes he is responsible. But he throws the ills of life into the scales as a compensation to offset the sins, so that the balance, he believes, wins for him an inexhaustible hunting-ground.

“Our Father,” was Hugh's daily prayer, “teach me the way to show my little brothers that as the sins of the flesh corrode the body, so must its loathsome touch carry infection to the indwelling soul, so that sometime, somewhere, somehow, it must be healed before it can live forever.” Sometimes then, his prayer prayed, he would ask, “It is so, is it not, our Father?

THE PERFECT FRIEND

A sick soul must either be healed or die just like any other part of us. It cannot be otherwise, can it? When I sin can my soul, which lives in such close communion with my body, dare to hope to escape infection?" And then perhaps he would say to his own soul, "What one man can do toward making ignorance to see and to use that greatest discovery in the science of the soul—the Crucified Christ—that will I do."

Hugh Hunt had moved the couch so that the sick man's head reclined near the opening of the tipi. Thus was the young fellow kept from choking to death prematurely, as he must have done had he been compelled to breathe in the stifling smoke which filled the room. Hugh had been there since early in the evening. He had brought clean blankets and pillows from his own too scanty store. Outside, where he had thrown them, lay a heap of filthy, germ-ridden blankets. Cases like this were the inception of that dread disease which later became the veritable curse of the people—tuberculosis. The harsh Winter had kept the Indians confined even more than was usual. A degenerating reliance upon rations which were sure to be doled out to them had bred habits of slothful ease which in turn had bred uncleannesses which in their turn became the *culture media* for inoculation and the spread of millions upon millions of bacteria, forerunners of that scourge which was to ravage this race as probably nothing had ever done before.

Outside it was very dark, while a dull, heavy, con-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

stant roar, not unlike the boom of surf, dominated the night with its aching moan. There had been a season of melting weather and the ice was running out; but it had turned cold again, bitterly cold, and the night wind was spitting snow from the northwest. Occasionally, the monotonous boom was broken by a loud cracking, grinding shriek, as some monster field of ice climbed ruthlessly and tumultuously upon some more slowly moving body, followed by a gurgling snarl as they parted company; and then again the dull, monotonous, steady sounding of the great flow. Before dark, it had been a wonderful sight, that maelstrom of heaving, leaping, roaring, cracking, grinding, climbing, snarling, rushing, whirling blocks of ice that were so uncannily like live things of supernatural power; but Hugh had not lingered long, because over in that poor little tipi crouching alone on the bleak plain, wind-swept and storm-beaten, with a gleam of wavering light showing upon the darkening and chilly air, a soul was about to go out upon the Great Unknown.

Presently, the woman, obeying an almost imperceptible motion of her husband's hand following the greater chill of the air which had impelled him to draw closer to the fire, sidled toward the entrance where the flaps had been thrown back to admit the purer atmosphere for the benefit of the sick man. She kept her sharp, beady eyes upon the Missionary bending over the couch as she did so. She thought he was so absorbed that he would not see. Softly, guiltily, she closed the entrance, and, with a little inward smile of

THE PERFECT FRIEND

triumph, was slipping quietly back to her place when she was arrested by the stern voice of the Missionary, who had raised his head quickly when he became immediately and unpleasantly conscious of the closeness, the stench, and the choking wood smoke, and realized that the only inlet for fresh air had been surreptitiously cut off.

"Open it at once, I say!" cried Hugh, in Dakota. "Would you rob your son of the last moments of his life by letting him suffocate in this close atmosphere? Open it, I say! Look! The boy is gasping for breath!"

The woman obeyed sullenly. Why a Missionary of the white man's God should be ministering here at the death bed of a pagan, in the house of a pagan, and was being so strangely though unwillingly obeyed, while Dakota *wakan* men were so conspicuously absent, perhaps could only be explained in this way: He had been good to the young man, who was little more than a boy, and the boy had loved him because of it. Not because of what he had said or taught — much of that had been but little understood — but because he had been good to him. Simply that — he had been good to him, and the Indian heart is a singularly grateful one. The pagan parents of this dying boy could not forget that Hugh had been good to him.

"It is so cold and he is so weak," she whimpered, even while she obeyed the mandate. "It will kill him."

Again Hugh bent over the boy. It was past midnight now and he was very tired. It had been a harsh,

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

a cruel Winter. There had been much sickness and death, many long journeys, much exposure, many discouragements. He was gaunt from lack of sleep, and the consuming fire of his soul burned through his eyes more feverishly than ever. The hand which kept gently brushing the black straggling hair back from the boy's forehead was strangely white and as thin as the boy's own disease-wasted one. But although an inward fire seemed ever to be consuming the Missionary, he never seemed to burn out. To-night, though he was deadly tired, his touch was as soothing, his voice as comforting, his presence as much a benediction, as if he had but just come to the stricken household fresh from rest and sleep.

"The ice is going out."

It was the boy who spoke. Hugh bent his head lower to catch the broken whisper.

"Yes, the ice is going out," he said, gently. He had thought the boy was in a stupor and would not rally again.

"It makes a big noise," came flutteringly from the boy's lips.

"It will run out soon and then it will not sound so loud," said Hugh, and thought sadly of the young life which would so soon be run out, too, and of the awful quiet the fleeting soul would leave behind it.

"It must have gorged somewhere."

"I think not, little brother. Why?"

What was it the boy was saying? Still lower Hugh bent to listen. At first he was at a loss to understand.

THE PERFECT FRIEND

The voice was so faint and broken — the words so strange and removed. But at last, ah, yes, he knew now.

“I lie mysteriously across the lake,
I lie mysteriously across the lake,
Decoying some souls, let me eat him alive,
I lie mysteriously across the lake,
Let me eat him alive.”

Haltingly but faithfully, the weird words spun themselves out from the failing consciousness of the dying Indian, and patterned themselves clearly to the understanding of the Missionary. They were the words of an old chant still used sometimes in the medicine dances of the Dakotas of the Missouri, though it originated years ago among the Santees in Minnesota, who believed that one of the Onkteri gods dwelt under the Falls of Saint Anthony. The tradition ran that this god, the male Onkteri, who was supposed to animate the water and the land beneath it, as the female Onkteri animated the earth, passed down the channel of the river after it had been finally relieved from an immense ice gorge, devouring the souls of all who lost their lives during the flood which followed the clearing of the channel. Not only did he devour the souls of the unfortunate victims but he had caused the ice to gorge in the first place so that he might feed. The old order of Dakotas believed that the Onkteri lived on human souls.

Poor young man. What a child he had been when he had been drilled and re-drilled until he was letter perfect in the strange beliefs and ceremonies of the Indian people! So thoroughly imbued with their mel-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

ancholy mysticism had he been from his childhood up that now dying with a Christian minister holding his hands and bearing a lamp to lighten the way of the lonely journey, he needs must babble yet to the stern music of a crashing ice-laden channel the mournful chants of ignorant superstition and lying tradition. So innately reticent upon religious subjects is the Indian nature, that not until now did Hugh Hunt realize the firm hold the faith of their fathers still had upon the younger generation. It was food for much thought, and it bore fruit in his after ministry when he caused the children, with their sunny faith and loyal hearts, to open the doors of those dark dungeons of superstition, centuries old, where their fathers had been confined all their lives and their fathers before them.

Harder blew the wind. Thicker fell the snow. It swirled through the opening and drifted upon the couch. Hugh brushed it away but he did not draw the flaps. It grew very late and very cold. The fire was dying down. No one seemed to think about it any more. The sick man's voice had failed him after giving utterance to the weird chant which had been put into his mind by the boom of the grinding ice out yonder. The tick, tick of Hugh's watch sounded startlingly loud in the stillness of that ghostly hour in the lonely Indian tipi out upon the wind-swept prairie.

Suddenly, a figure appeared at the dimly lighted entrance. There had been no sound of the man's approach. He had come against the wind and the press of his footsteps had been carried away and lost in the

THE PERFECT FRIEND

swish of the snow and in the howl of the northwest wind. The shivering group around the dying fire made no movement whatsoever, either of welcome or of resentment; only in the squaw mother's eyes there was a snapping light, as if she might have resented the intrusion had it not been for the other white man who had been good to her son. The father appeared absolutely unconscious of the unexpected visitation and the sister never once looked up, although every fibre of her being knew that one of the arrogant race blocked her father's doorway. Hugh Hunt, however, sprang to his feet with a great gladness in his face. He seized the newcomer's hands and drew him within the smoke-begrimed but welcome shelter.

"Locke Raynor, my dear fellow!" he cried, softly, not even in his joy unmindful of the soul that was passing or of the sadness of the little group crouching near. "I knew you would establish your innocence! It was only a question of time. But I never hoped for your release so soon. Tell me, how did it happen? I am so glad! So glad!"

Locke was haggard and soiled and worn. He had walked most of the way. He had not dared make open requisition for stage transportation. Once he had been able to secure a mangy range horse from a man whose own ways of life were so questionable that he made a point of never asking questions. He had considered himself extremely fortunate, but before the day was out, he had been compelled to leave the worn-out carcass behind for the wolves. The animal was lit-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

tle worth the heavy gold ring exchanged for it; but it had given Locke a few hours of much needed rest without losing time, and that was something. He was stiff and lame with fatigue and exposure but he could smile even yet, and he did smile, thinking of the immensity of the surprise he was about to spring upon his friend of happier days.

"I broke jail," he said, laconically, and Hugh, looking upon him in his dishevelled condition, knew that he spoke the truth; and with his wonderful sympathy of understanding which was so quietly comprehending as to be almost a sixth sense, he also knew why he had done it. His face became very grave.

"It is madness," he said, "sheer madness. Such reckless procedure must inevitably work to your complete undoing. You cannot hope to escape recapture. You are known all over the Reservation. Your trial was far too sensational to permit of your walking abroad with impunity, and your breaking jail brands you indubitably in the eyes of the people as guilty. You must go back at once."

"You are good to say 'in the minds of the people,'" said Locke, a hard glitter in his eyes. "I am grateful to you for not so branding me yourself. I thank you for sparing my feelings in so gentlemanly a manner."

"I have always believed in your innocence. You must not forget that I was with you when you raided the Dorseys," said Hugh, simply.

"Forgive me," cried Locke, impulsively, "my troubles have soured me, that is all. I have never really

THE PERFECT FRIEND

doubted you. If I had, I never would have been here. You believe me, don't you? You are the one man in all the world whom I can trust to help me. I have come straight to you to ask that help. You were not at the mission house. I traced you to this abandoned place by intuition, I think. I saw the light and I knew your peculiar predilection for ailing Injuns."

"But you are so all wrong," said Hugh, thoughtfully. "In breaking jail, you have broken the law. How then can you hope to prosper?"

"You would hang me then, an innocent man, because it is wrong to break jail?" demanded Locke, bitterly.

"No, no! But you are to have a new trial and you know that you will be acquitted then. Do you doubt that the right always prevails in the end?"

"Well, I am going back to jail when I have found Katharine," said Locke, meeting the issue squarely.

"I am glad of that. I might have known that you would. It makes things easier. Now whatever we decide to do, we can do with a clear conscience because of the righteousness of our intentions. You see, being a preacher, I have to preach," he deprecated, with an illuminating smile that made his worn face beautiful.

"If I had not said that I was going back," said Locke, curiously, "would you have given me up?"

Hugh Hunt shook his head, still smiling.

"How then would you have explained it if people found out that you had harbored a notorious law-breaker? What an example for a preacher to set!"

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"I don't know," said Hugh, a questioning, wistful look taking the place of the dazzling smile. "If any transgressed because of my act, I should probably have had to answer for him sometime — to my Maker. But you are my friend. I could not give up my friend. It would take more strength than I have to do that."

Locke's eyes smarted suddenly, and a lump came into his throat. Here was the perfect friend. Hugh Hunt had said that it took a sublimer heroism than was his to sacrifice a friend for the greater good. Was there any greater good in all the world than a perfect friend, and might not man's ultimate salvation be when each was a perfect friend?

"Tell me what to do now," he said, brusquely, to hide his emotion. "I can't hang around the Agency. Can you smuggle me into your room to-night?"

"To recur to the subject of the risk," replied Hugh, gravely, "everything is being done to find Miss Mendenhall that can possibly be done. What more can you — a man who must hide by day and skulk by night — forgive me — what more, I say, can a man in your position do than is being done? You are only running your head into a noose. If we could not do what you want to do, I should say, 'Go, and God speed you,' but everything is being done and more, a thousand times more, than you could possibly hope to do. Listen. For Katharine Mendenhall's sake do not bring this added evidence of guilt down upon your head. No one would believe you honest in your motives — no one at least but a poor preacher — you know that as well as

THE PERFECT FRIEND

I do. I say again, for Katharine's sake do not persist in this wild and dangerous course."

Locke flushed but he met his friend's look steadily.

"That is why I am here," he said, "for Katharine's sake. Do not waste time by trying to persuade me to go back. I shall not go back and I shall not be taken back until I have found Katharine. That is enough, I think."

"Yes," said Hugh, quietly, "that is enough. What are you going to do first?"

"Come with me out of this smoke-cursed hell hole to your room or somewhere where we can talk over plans and where you can tell me all about — how it happened. Remember I have only a garbled account of everything and I want the whole truth, Hugh, the whole truth and the straight truth. I knew that she had not yet been found. I gathered that on the way up."

"Yes, Locke, all in good time, but not just yet," said Hugh, gently. "You can see why. This poor boy is dying."

He slipped back to his old place at the bedside and he could not but be struck by the awful change those few moments of his absence had wrought upon the wasted countenance.

"He will die anyway, won't he?" cried Locke, impatiently. "For God's sake, Hugh Hunt, if you are my friend, don't keep me waiting any longer!" Then he continued, impelled by a something in the Missionary's attitude that was as irrevocable as death itself: "Are n't you coming? Are you really going to put

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

a dirty dog of an Injun who has n't a single claim upon you in the whole wide world before one of your own race? Why, Hugh, I'm cold and hungry and tired — God, how tired I am — and in trouble and yet you smile and wait for a dog to die!"

He was tired and cold and hungry and sore of heart or he would not have been so bitter.

"No claim?" said Hugh, softly. "Why, he is my friend. I have visited with him and broken bread with him in his own home, and sometimes he has visited me in mine. He had ever a good word for me. He is my friend. And besides, Locke, I can tell you everything there is to tell right here. We need not wait. These people cannot understand one word of English. Wait a little for your food and fire and rest, Locke. It is very hard to die alone, even for an Indian who is too proud to acknowledge it. He trusts me — and he likes me, too, I think, and if he should be looking for me and I was not here, I could not bear it. Wait a little, won't you, and then everything I have, my time and all my worldly goods, are yours."

"Go ahead," said Locke, ashamed but still a little hurt. This being a perfect friend to a low-down Injun was rather belittling to himself. "I suppose you'd never forgive me if I hinted to you to hasten the dissolution as much as possible, so I won't say it. But I do beg you with all my heart to tell me about Katharine."

There was little to tell beside what the sheriff had detailed already to Locke in the jail. Absolutely no

THE PERFECT FRIEND

trace had been discovered as yet. One thing, however, which Locke had not heard before set him to thinking deeply. On the same day that Katharine was lost — “And by the way,” Hugh softly interpolated, “this is the young man she came to see that day,” and “I’ll warrant you these people know more than they have told,” responded Locke, grimly,—Yellow Owl, the great necromancer of the Little Yanktons, disappeared with a band of young men, and no one, neither Black Tomahawk nor any of the other chiefs nor any of their people, knew whither he had gone. Many thought that he had joined the hostiles in the Powder River country. Others were of the opinion that he had gone into the wilderness to fast and to hold close communion with his patron spirits and to dream dreams of yet more boldness and sacredness to tradition than he had ever dreamed before, and that when he came back, it would be to hurl new invectives against the white man’s teaching and the white man’s creed, claiming that he had been inspired and commanded by his gods to stamp out of the Indian country, once and for all, the accursed encroachments of the white race — and that the time was at hand when this thing should be done. Yellow Owl’s intense hatred of all pale-faces was well known. It was also generally believed that he would take a peculiar delight in furthering real war between the races. That he was bitterly disappointed when all hostile demonstration ceased on the part of his nation when the War Department closed the gates of the Black Hills to settlement, no one who knew him doubted. Perhaps he

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

dreamed of being a second Little Crow and of precipitating upon the Missouri River region an outbreak like to that of the Minnesota, of which Little Crow had been the inspiration. But he would be a greater than Tayoatidoota, the last of the Little Crow dynasty, for when he took the warpath to cleanse his land of the contaminating presence of the alien race, doubtless he told himself that he should not fail. There were also those who connected Yellow Owl's quiet, unforewarned slipping away with the sudden disappearance of the Agent's daughter, but these were not many, and, almost to a man, were Indians. The whites, like Stephen Oliver, believed that the Yanktonais were too loyal to Tahu Tanka to sanction in the least any harm to his daughter, and as to her falling into the hands of hostiles, why, strictly speaking there were not any hostiles any more. They were practically all friendlies since the Red Cloud Treaty, and the later evacuation of the Black Hills. Those who were still on the ragged edge kept well to the buffalo lands because they were afraid to hang around civilization, and scorned it, besides. Hugh Hunt was afraid, however, and this fear was at once communicated to Locke. The Missionary knew Indian nature perhaps better than any other white man of his day, and he knew Yellow Owl's nature especially because it was against that extraordinary, unprincipled, vicious, mighty priesthood of which Yellow Owl was a supreme evil spirit that the White Robe was so gallantly fighting. None knew better than these Dakota medicine men what Christianity meant to their

THE PERFECT FRIEND

calling. None would carry the war against it to such desperate extremes as they. Hugh Hunt knew that Yellow Owl hated Major Mendenhall and his family and he strongly suspected the reason. He had not been there to see the medicine man's look of hate when Katharine Mendenhall knelt by the bedside of White Flower, but he believed that Yellow Owl was clever enough to understand the ruse which had been worked upon him. If he knew, he would never forgive it — and did he not know?

“I will get Running Bird to help us,” said Hugh, at last, and with decision. “We must pit cunning against cunning. You and I could do nothing alone. We are too clumsy in our interpretation of Indian methods — and of course the Agent is out of the question for leadership. He is simply frantic.”

“Trot out your Running Bird at once then,” said Locke. “Is he the same ‘Storm-Fiend’ chap who gave us the tent and who was Black Tomahawk's interpreter at the trial? This expedition starts without any more delay.”

“I think — I am afraid it will take some diplomacy on our part to enlist his aid,” said Hugh, hesitatingly. “He has not been quite the same since Custer invaded the Black Hills last year. I went out to tell him of General Sheridan's faithful expulsion of all would-be gold hunters but he still seemed different. I think he resents that trespass very bitterly, and especially our insolent presumption in daring to seek and to find *their* gold. I think he does not quite believe in us yet, and

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

I sometimes think there is another secret influence working against us, too, but I will do what I can. I still have faith that Running Bird will listen to me. I have not seen him since the trial. He disappeared then and I am not even sure that he has returned to the Reservation."

"It looks as if he were still our friend," said Locke, hopefully, "or he would not have taken the trouble to volunteer his services at the trial."

"We will hope so," replied Hugh, thoughtfully. "If Sheridan had not kept faith, I should have lost Running Bird and many, many more fine young men. I think he will never quite forget our treachery at Ash Hollow, and I shudder to think what will happen if ever Sheridan's order is withdrawn."

It was in that darkness which is so dark just before the dawn that the young Indian passed away. He was seized with a violent coughing spell and when the paroxysm ended, he was dead. He died in Hugh's arms. The latter had raised him when he saw that this was to be the end; and though he died in the faith of his fathers, the boy's eyes smiled into Hugh's before he went, and that smile paid a hundred-fold for the long weary night of watching and waiting. A singularly grateful heart has an Indian.

"Now you are ready to come?" asked Locke, preparing to leave the stricken place at once; for already the desolate death chant was raised in that tipi, and it was a very dreary habitation indeed.

"In a moment," replied Hugh, absently.

THE PERFECT FRIEND

He spoke a few earnest words in the Dakota language to each member of the family. Sometimes, they seemed to expostulate, but in the main they were acquiescent, and then the two white men stepped outside into the cold crisp dawn. It could scarcely be called dawn, however. There was merely a faint suggestion of pale light showing above the Eastern horizon. The wind had died.

"What on earth are you waiting for now?" cried Locke, impatiently.

"I must burn these blankets," said Hugh, putting a match, as he spoke, to the heap of unclean bedding that he had tossed out in the night. "They did not like the idea very well. The boy's effects were all to be given away. I finally persuaded them to let me do it. It may be I am wrong, but I believe that consumption is infectious; and oh, Raynor, if it is, don't you see the awfulness of what is coming to my people unless we can make them see what it means to be clean?"

"You are a visionary, Hugh, an addle-pated visionary," said Locke, bluntly, unimpressed by his friend's fervent appeal. "I'm not denying that you are a lovable one, but a visionary you are — so far ahead of your time that if you are n't careful, you will be accounted a harmless lunatic and retired. Take my advice, old man, and don't waste so much valuable time on dirty, stupid, unappreciative Injuns who are really better off without your ministrations. What's the use of making them discontented with their lot? There are plenty of us, Hugh, who need your help and I think we

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

are a little more able to appreciate a man like you, too."

Hugh Hunt only smiled.

When the flames had died away and only a heap of ashes remained of what, but for one man who was so far ahead of his time that he had been called a harmless and helpless visionary, might have scattered the germs of a deadly disease — already too inevitably stamped upon this race — to almost every nook and corner of the Reservation,— for the Indian is an inveterate traveller, — the two men walked quickly away to Hugh's room in the mission house. They must be safely within before any one at the Agency was stirring.

"Here are bread and beans," said Hugh, presently, returning from an adjoining room with those articles in his hands, "and here is coffee. Boil it over the alcohol lamp. Then wash up a little, if you like, and go to bed. Be sure to lock the door after I am gone. I will give three short raps when I come back. Do not open to any other knock; and do not wonder if you hear any one moving about in the next room. I have much uncere-monious company from among my people at all times of the day or night. They will not try to enter this room. They will wait out there. Good-bye for a little while. I hope that I can find Running Bird."

CHAPTER XX

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

IT was nearing the middle of October. Running Bird and his band, together with Hugh Hunt and Locke Raynor, whom the Indians now called Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail, were encamped within a few days' journey of the Black Hills on their return from their Summer's sojourn in the Powder River country. They had gone into camp early. Now that they were well on their homeward way, there did not seem to be so much haste as there had been. If the Fall should continue open, there was plenty of time in which to reach the Agency before Winter once more locked the Great Reservation close within its icy and lingering grasp. The white men especially did not wish to go in for the Winter until they should be compelled to do so by the growing inclemency of the weather. Their quest into the Powder River country had proved an unsuccessful one; but there remained the chance of stumbling upon some definite clue even upon the homeward way. Hence the efforts of Locke and the Missionary were ever bent upon contriving to make the forward movement of the camp as dilatory as possible. Running Bird was acquiescent now that the camp was finally and definitely

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

upon its return trip. He had insisted upon the move. There were a number of women and little children in the party, and travelling under such circumstances after Winter set in was not to be considered for a moment. Now, however, he saw goal; and the Indian is the one native American who is not constitutionally in a hurry.

Loath as the two white men were to give up the search for several long months, they realized the utter futility of any effort on their part to continue it without the aid and protection of Running Bird and his people. The country was full of roving bands of hostile Tetons who would have not the slightest compunction in killing a white man on sight if they met him alone. Moreover, their knowledge of how to get about in this vast and trackless country in the dead of Winter was wholly inadequate to the terrible demands which would be made upon it. Even grant that by some miraculous intervention of Providence they were fortunate enough to escape all the perils of hostiles, of storm, and of famine, and to strike the trail so desperately longed for, by what persuasion could they induce Katharine's captors to relinquish her, if it was revenge or worse which they were determined to wreak upon her fair and innocent womanhood? They would only be shot down like dogs. That would not matter, of course, if it might only help Katharine, but it would leave her only the more defenceless. It was of no use to plan any other way. Without Running Bird, they were as helpless as the Babes in the Wood. There was always that haunting thought besides that maybe she had not been taken away by the

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

Indians after all. If she had not, perhaps even now the Agent or some one of the relief parties who were prosecuting the search at home had found her long ago. It was too good to be true, of course, but nevertheless the thought was there, and it helped to make the idea of leaving the field bearable. Running Bird had promised faithfully to come out with them again in the Spring if she were still missing. There was nothing else to do but to go back with him, but God alone knew how hard it was.

Running Bird had been faithful. No one could deny that. In spite of his bitter arraignment of white men's motives, he had been faithful. Hugh was thinking about that arraignment and still suffering on account of it as he watched the evening camp-fires being builded, diffusing a pleasant warmth into the clear, crisp air which already felt the touch of coming Winter. He had gone to Running Bird the very day after the ice flow ran out and this is what Running Bird said to him:

"It is always the Indian who must give, give, give. Some day he will be tired of giving. You white men never give much. A few baubles which your women scorn and mock ours for liking. A little whiskey to make us mad so we will spend our money for more and thus you get back the paltry sum you pay us for our birthright. It is not much to give. But the poor Indian must give everything he has. He must give all the time. We have listened long for you to say it is enough. But you will not say it until you have everything. The Indian is not a fool. Some day, *he* will

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

say it is enough. The buffalo runs and runs until he can run no longer and then he turns and charges his enemy. It is then the chase gets very exciting, and it is well for the hunter to have plenty of ammunition and a fast horse. The Slender Ash is here to ask again. He asks me to go with him to the ends of the earth. He asks me to help him find the child of Big Neck. He asks me never to stop until she is found. My brother is not a fool. He can very easily see that we might have to creep along the nether sands of the river all the way to the big water if we do not stop until she is found. I think it is much to ask."

Hugh had gone back to the little locked room in the mission house rebuffed, discouraged, heart-sick. Running Bird had stolidly refused to say anything further upon the subject. He smiled a little now, remembering how great was his astonishment when, awaking early the next morning from a night of troubled sleep, he found a small city of tipis clustering cozily and sociably in and about his door yard. They had not been there at bed time. At daylight, they were there. Truly, it must have been a silent company, and a skilled, thus so deftly and so quietly to erect a city over-night. A few years ago, he would have found the ghostly proximity of these strange neighbors decidedly startling; that morning, he only smiled and went about his breakfast preparations light-heartedly, for his intuition had told him who it was that had come.

Later in the day, he received a formal call from Running Bird, who informed him that some time ago he

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

had secured permission to take his entire band and go into the buffalo country to hunt during the Summer. At first, they had not planned on making the start for two or three weeks yet; but they had changed their minds. They were now on their way. If Slender Ash and Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail cared to go with them, neither he nor any of the band would put forth the least objection. They were going to hunt buffalo and to fill their Winter lodges with meat, and they would not return until the first snows; but if, during that time, they saw anything of Sun-in-the-hair or heard of her through any one whom they might meet, why, his brother knew that they were not the white-woman-stealing kind nor would they brook it in any of their race. This speech ended, he stalked out without deigning to explain why he had changed his mind about the time of starting, or why he had allowed the Missionary to leave his Winter camp across the river so completely deceived in regard to his real intentions.

Hugh and Locke asked nothing more however. They at once set about their own preparations for the long journey into the wilderness. It took but a couple of days to perfect their arrangements. They folded a tent and lashed it with other supplies upon a pack horse, turned two extra ponies into the Indian herd in case anything should happen to the ones they rode, and, saddling their own horses, were ready. Early on the third day, the camp broke up and filed out almost as quietly as it had come, leaving a deserted hearth-

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

stone, some dead ashes, and a forlorn aspect of lonesomeness and decay. Early as was the hour, Locke had wrapped himself completely in the folds of an Indian blanket to guard against recognition if any one should be about.

The meeting with the young warriors of Running Bird's camp was a strange one for Locke. It was almost a year since he had met them as an organized band for the first and last time until now. Then they were decked out in hideous raiment, daubed with brilliant pigments, clamorous with whiskey, and carried away with pride of their belligerent demonstration. Now they were quietly enough arrayed, clean-skinned, reticent, sober, tolerant — fine specimens of manhood every one of them. As Running Bird had grown in stature of soul and mentality and in physical cleanliness as well, so had his loyal adherents grown in the same way. His influence upon them was marked and all for good. The young men were stronger in purpose, in loyalty, in judgment, in morality, in everything which makes for manhood than they were a year ago. Mad Wolf, always a malcontent, now a murderer and renegade, was believed to have sought protection in the hostile camps of the Powder River country. Several others not in sympathy with the real conservatism of Running Bird's policies had withdrawn not only from the league but from their people as well and gone their several ways as inclination guided them. Most of them were fluttering about the hostile camps with those other Brules who were still wild and unsettled. The

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

society had gained, too, by the election to membership of the earnest young grandson of old White Shield. He had not yet won his spurs but he was universally liked and trusted by his companions who knew well why he wanted to accompany them to the Powder, and they were very glad indeed to render him what assistance they could in trailing his grandfather's murderer. All understood, tacitly, that young Black Bull was to have the first chance. If he failed, the band was in honor bound to purge itself of the terrible dishonor the renegade had brought upon it by having once been a member of the soldier band.

Major Mendenhall had known of this volunteer relief party, but he little dreamed who was the main instigator of it. Certain troops which he had ordered out were already scouting through the nearer hills west of the river trying to locate Yellow Owl. There was no specific charge against Yellow Owl. It was not the first time by any means that he had stolen mysteriously away from his own Reservation leaving no word as to the why and the wherefore. But because Katharine Mendenhall had slipped out of the life at the Agency at the very same time that Yellow Owl had folded his tent and silently stolen away, it behooved the Agent to ascertain beyond the shadow of a doubt whether or not any meaning might be attached to their simultaneous disappearances. So many believed her to be at the bottom of the river, however, that the pursuit was half-hearted; and moreover it was a vast region in which to be lost, with the advantage ever on the side of the one

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

lost — and Yellow Owl was lost, at least to the ken of all on the Big Bend Reservation.

There followed long days of stern marching through a rough and rugged country, and long nights of troubled sleep for the Missionary and Locke Raynor — while the happy Brules hunted buffalo. They pressed deeper and ever deeper into the wilds. Occasionally, they met roaming bands of hunters like themselves. From these people, they received varied accounts of a Commission appointed to make a treaty for the right to mine in the Black Hills, and once, late in the Summer, they heard that Red Cloud and Spotted Tail were in the midst of a lively and acrimonious dispute as to just where this Commission was to meet all the chiefs and head men of the Dakotas in council. They had not yet heard what location was finally agreed upon nor how the council had resulted. Hugh was afraid at first that Running Bird would desire to be present at this meeting which was to bear upon a subject so near to his heart. He was surprised, therefore, but greatly relieved when Running Bird made no move to disband and take his representation thither. So the Spring had grown into Summer and the Summer, wedding the sun, had borne prairie flower children of a wild, surpassing beauty, and then had passed into a sweet, serene, blue-hilled, dreamy old age. The Summer was gone and they had no word of Katharine Mendenhall. And now they were going home.

Towards evening of the following day, they met with a vast concourse of Indians on the march from

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

the southeast, and who were on the point of going into camp to the music of barking dogs, shouting children, and screaming squaws, mingled with the din and clatter of cooking utensils, as the pack horses were relieved of their sounding burdens. The head chief of this multitude proved to be no less a personage than that high-minded Uncpapa, Chief Gall, who immediately invited Running Bird and the white friends travelling under his protection to a feast in his lodge that night.

After the feast and the smoke, this powerful leader was pleased generously to praise the great chief, Little Thunder, now gone into the Happy Hunting Grounds, and to condemn bitterly the cowardly massacre at Ash Hollow. He commended Running Bird for many brave deeds of which he had heard and especially for that fine loyalty to their race which had prompted him and the others of his soldier band to swear to take up arms against their white enemies if their treaty rights were again violated. He had heard about that patriotic and splendid war demonstration through the country of the Yanktons who had already bent their necks and were too cowardly to say, It is enough. Perhaps it would yet bear fruit. If, *when* the Tetons struck — the Missionary always on the alert for new signs of dissatisfaction among his people could not help but notice the significant change of expression from supposition to positiveness — maybe some Yankton would be found enlisted under the standards of the great war chiefs of the West, and, if so, to Running Bird and his band would be ascribed all the honor of this change of heart.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Hugh was so favorably impressed by the dignity, the intelligence, and the fair-mindedness of this still comparatively young chief that he was sorry when the eulogy ended. He had no need to blush for his friend, however. Running Bird also had simple, impressive, sweet-voiced powers of oratory and the past, present, and future of the upright Gall were extolled to the skies in terms of honest admiration and with a becoming modesty on the part of the younger man in thus so freely addressing so great a chief and leader of men. The season of pleasant interchange of compliment closed, Gall picked up a new thread of discourse. His face had grown very grave and there were visible signs of an intense and growing excitement on the countenances of his head men who were grouped around the lodge in the order of strict precedence.

"My friends are journeying from the Powder eastward to the Missouri," he began, in a musical monotone which gradually, as he proceeded, became punctuated with much feeling. "They have hunted all the Summer for the buffalo. They are returning with much meat. I am glad that their lodges will groan with plenty this Winter and that their children will not have to go hungry. I have heard that the Great Father does not always count very well or else he forgets and does not send enough provisions to the Agencies to keep you from the pains of an empty stomach. Because you have been concerned with the hunting and have been so far away, I am of the opinion that you have not yet heard what took place near Red Cloud's

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

Agency when all the tribes went into a great council there with the Commission appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. We are on our way back from there now for our own Fall hunting. We refused to have our names put down to any cheating paper which said we would relinquish any part of our land, already so pitifully dwindled away; and when their head man said then that they only wanted to buy the right to mine and take the gold away, we said, 'Pay us what the gold is worth.' They would not pay us what the gold was worth, so we came away. They said we asked too much. Red Cloud said, 'Those hills extend clear to the sky, maybe they go above the sky, and that is the reason I ask for so much.' And he was right. They are worth more to us than the Great Father will ever pay us for them. Therefore we will keep them. So we came away; and the Great Father has turned his back upon us in anger because we did not run to give him what he asked. It is well that we did not; because if we had, then we should all have died pretty soon because he wanted our buffalo ranges on the Powder as well as our gold out of the Hills. How then could we maintain ourselves and our children? We would starve to death. Perhaps that would please the Great Father. Then he could have all our land. But we think we have a right to live and to have our land. We think it is the Great Father who asks too much. We could not give it, so he took his soldiers away, and the people are now pouring into the Black Hills by the many thousands. It is revenge on us for not giving him what

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

he wanted. He does not care anything about the sacred promises of the Treaty. All he seems to care about is getting our land."

He paused for a moment. The glint of the Missionary's gold cross, caught in a gleam from the smouldering fire, had attracted his attention. A little shiver ran over Hugh. Was there anything he could say *now* in answer to the arraignment of that cross, which he felt was coming? If it could only be that his own race did not make it so hard — so hard!

"I have heard," continued Gall, quietly, "that the white man's God has a fiery hell for people who lie, steal, swear falsely, kill, covet. I think he must be a very fine God. I think I should like to know such a God. It is pleasant to think that these white men who lie to us, who covet our land, who swear by their Great Holy Spirit that they will abide by the promises of the Treaty and then don't; who steal our land when we won't give it to them, and kill us when we dare to fight for it, will some day be caught in a mighty prairie fire and burn and burn. I should like it very much if the white priest, friend of Running Bird, would ask this Great Spirit to start the fire in my day. The Dakotas will promise not to put it out. Then when the white men are all burned up, perhaps we can enjoy our birthright in peace."

Sarcasm pure and simple — not sacrilege, for how could Gall be sacrilegious when he did not know? And what brilliant and double-edged sarcasm it was! Of what fatal folly they must dispossess themselves who

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

thought that it would be necessary for them to begin at the very foundation of intelligence in the endeavor to instil some learning and some culture of soul into the minds of an ignorant, low, brutal people! Did Gall's whole discourse show much of ignorance, lowness, brutality, or arrested development? Hugh thought not, and he only answered simply:

"The Great Spirit is always hoping that all His children, red and white, will be sorry that they have lied, coveted, sworn falsely, stolen, and killed. That is why, I think, He does not give us the Happy Hunting Grounds until we have left this world. I think He wants to give us all the time there is in which to be sorry. He hopes that we will *all* be sorry so that we can *all* be ready. No one can enter who is not first sorry."

His heart was aching. Must he lose Running Bird after all — and all those others? He had never understood quite so well before that Running Bird had made a solemn vow to take up arms in the event of a breaking of the Treaty obligations on the part of the United States. And how well he understood now that journey into the country of the peaceful Yanktons! It had all grown out of the first fierce resentment and fear of the Government's good faith when General Custer was sent out to the Hills on a reconnoissance more than a year ago. It seemed as if he could not bear to lose Running Bird; but if the young Indian went over to the hostiles now would he not have passed from him forever? Running Bird's vows were terrible things.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

That had been evidenced in the Sun Dance when he kept his word after the reason for giving it had altogether passed away. Who was there out in the Powder River country to tell him about the Man Who did not fight back? "Our Father, we have very much to answer for," said Hugh, in his discouragement; then he squared his shoulders and a light came into his eyes: "but if we are so frail after having the Great Apostle sent to us, I must not then lose heart because my red children — Thine and mine — fall often and often under the leadership of a little disciple like me." He smiled and that smile was a wonderful composite of tenderness, resolution, faith, love. Was there anything to keep him from following Running Bird into the Powder River country again? A far mightier than he had sanctioned leaving the ninety and nine to seek one — just one — who was lost.

"Yellow Owl was not at the council according to this Gall," said Locke, in deep discouragement, when they had returned to their own tipi. He was thin with the strain of the past Summer. His mouth was hard and his eyes were haunted. "Where is he, Hugh?"

"I wish I knew, Locke."

"I had hoped against hope that some one amongst all that crowd would have seen Yellow Owl or Katharine, and I'll warrant you they have, too. Hugh, if they have harmed her, I shall tear out their hearts. I mean it."

"Chief Gall is not a woman-stealer."

They turned quickly. Running Bird stood in the

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

entrance way. A breath of the cool October night had come in with him.

"He has promised to send a runner to me if he should ever find Sun-in-the-hair in a Dakota camp," continued Running Bird.

Hugh stood up. He went to Running Bird and laid his hand upon his shoulder with the old affectionate caress — the same which he had used when they two had answered that grim old Indian-fighter at Fort Laramie when they went to see if Red Cloud would keep faith and to help him to do it if they could.

"My brother —" he began, and Running Bird heard him patiently to the end of his impassioned plea for the Indian to go with him into the neutral country, where no fighting was or would be, and to stay with him there.

"Yes, I will go back with you," he said then, simply. "The country all about is full of Dakotas coming from the council. They are very bitter. Soon they will be gathering for war. There is no other way, it seems. I will go back with you to your Agency because a white man needs an Indian friend very much now. We will pass through the Hills on our way back to see for ourselves if they are filling up with white people. I want to be very sure for my little white brother's sake. After that, perhaps we shall talk again."

He did not say anything about staying at the Agency and Hugh continued to be much troubled in heart. In accordance with Running Bird's desire, they passed through the beautiful Black Hills and found that Gall

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

had not exaggerated conditions in his statement of facts. The country was literally swarming with miners. The gates were wide open at last.

The Summer hunters reached home and went their several ways. With the Brules that Winter lived a stranger—a white man—but no one of his kind, except the Missionary, ever saw him or knew that he was there. The unusual severity of the Winter forbade much travel. Like Yellow Owl and Mad Wolf, the Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail was safely lost somewhere in the heart of the Great Sioux Reservation. He was really as secure from apprehension by the United States authorities, at least until Spring opened, as he would have been had no verdict of "Guilty" been hanging over his head. In the early part of the Winter, the fatalist, Black Tomahawk, gathered the remnants of his family about him, including all his immediate relatives, and went into the Powder River country to hunt. Many Indians from that and other Agencies went west with the consent of their Agents to hunt buffalo in the unceded territory. They had need to go because it was one of the lean years at the Agencies, and they had a right to go under the Treaty. Still, Running Bird had not "talked again," and a great hope sprang up in Hugh's heart.

In December, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs sent word that all the Agency Indians who were then in the unceded territory and who did not return to their several Agencies before the thirty-first of January would be considered hostile. The runners who carried the

THE GATES THROWN OPEN

message to the Indians were not able to get back until some time in February. The army had long since been obliged to suspend all operations on account of the severity of the season. The hunters had their wives and children with them. Few would have survived a return journey through the trackless, Winter-gripped wilderness. But the order said "before the thirty-first of January," so on the first day of February, the allotted time having expired and the Indians not having returned as they were commanded, the Secretary of the Interior declared them hostile and turned them over to the War Department, that the military authorities might deal with them as they saw fit. General Sheridan immediately declared war upon them.

On the first of March, Running Bird "talked again."

"I go now. Good-bye. The Great Father has declared war against us and there is no other way. He commanded the Agency Indians to return from the hunting, but he did not give them time to get back. By never sleeping or resting, no one could have gotten back so soon. The messenger ran very fast, but he could not get back until away in February. Black Tomahawk was very friendly to the whites but he did not have wings to fly back with White Flower and Smoke Woman and the old mother. Now he cannot come back because the Great Father has said. Black Tomahawk is a proud man. You will see. He will never return even when the Great Father is very sorry. When the soldiers were taken away from guarding the Black Hills, my heart cried out loud, *go*, but I waited for my little

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L`

white brother's sake. But when the Great Father commands us to do what cannot be done, then I see that I have waited too long. It is enough. It will be well for him if he has plenty of ammunition and a very fast horse."

He turned to go. At the door, he paused a moment.

"A runner came in last night from Gall," he said. "The chief keeps his promises. He has seen Yellow Owl. The Agent's daughter is not with the medicine man."

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

JUNE on the Powder River!

Katharine Mendenhall, daughter of Major and Mrs. Mendenhall, and White Flower, daughter of Chief Black Tomahawk and Smoke Woman, though so unlike yet presented many points of resemblance on this Summer day. The Caucasian girl was so tanned as to be almost as swarthy in complexion as the Dakota maid. Indeed, at a cursory glance, she might very easily have been mistaken for an Indian. Closer inspection, however, would have revealed the blue eyes, finer features, and still yellow though much sunburned hair of the dominant race. She was clad in neatly fitting garments of antelope skin, whose short fringed skirt gave the whole costume a bizarre but finished and rather dressy air of distinction. Katharine was well pleased with her handiwork. She had spent much time and labor upon the fashioning of it. She was much changed but very beautiful still. She would always be beautiful. The out-of-door life for more than a year had given her freedom of step, added grace of movement, much self-reliance, abounding health. All these attributes White Flower possessed in common with Katharine Mendenhall.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Perhaps the young women were not so different after all.

The awful shadow of the fear of death which had rested upon Katharine's fair face ever since that terrible early twilight of storm, when Yellow Owl turned her horse's head another way, lifted when Black Tomahawk came into the buffalo country to hunt. Life had been bearable since that day; for, although the old Yanktonais chief could not be prevailed upon to take her home, however much she begged with tears and prayers and promises of fabulous rewards, instinctively she trusted him and in her heart believed that he would keep her from harm. He never bent to explain to this white captive why she had been removed from the lodge of Yellow Owl and brought to Black Tomahawk's own happier home, where the grateful-hearted but silent Smoke Woman ministered to her comfort as to an honored guest, and where the Chief himself showed her much deference while maintaining his steadfast uncommunicativeness, and Katharine did not ask why. She only thanked God that the hideous nightmare of her life in Yellow Owl's lodge was over. During that time, every day that dawned had been a fear-enshrouded one. She had never risen from her couch of skins without asking herself, Is this the last day I have to live? They had been all days of much pain and labor and weariness besides the constant dread. The fierce, vindictive, hating wife of the Indian doctor had forced her to toil to which she was wholly untrained and unaccustomed, and had lashed her with sarcastic epithets

CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

of which, happily, she understood nothing but the spirit. She had asked herself *why* so many times since that initial journey into the frozen and storm-beaten hostile country that she was weary of asking without answer, and, like a tired child come home, without question, she nestled down and basked in the sure and kindly protection of her Indian friends.

What did Yellow Owl want with her? Why had he stolen her away from her home? What was he going to do with her? Where was he going to take her? Would he kill her? How would he do it? Would he torture her first? Would he burn fagots under her feet and arm-pits as she had heard once that certain Pawnees did long ago to a captive Sioux maiden called Haxti? Would they shoot her full of arrows or would they use guns now? Was she to be a sacrifice to some heathen god? These were some of the questions which had shadowed Katharine Mendenhall's life all during the months of her captivity to the treacherous medicine man, and had thinned her face, hollowed her eyes and brought there a look of dread which even the renewed hope and joy of life under the beneficent care of Black Tomahawk and Smoke Woman could not altogether obliterate.

It was not all peace in Black Tomahawk's lodge, however. Katharine received scant courtesy from the old grandmother; and White Flower at first ignored her presence with the serene indifference of superb acting, behaving on all occasions just as if the white interloper were not and never had been there.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Gradually, however, White Flower's assumed indifference gave place to an attitude of armed neutrality which in good time took on the likeness of tolerance; and finally, this last dreamer child of the Chief, while hating the whites with as much fervid and jealous resentment as ever, came to except this one sweet girl from her general condemnation and to admit her, not yet to the inner sanctuary of her heart's secrets and purposes, not yet to the like of that fellowship which was tearing the heart strings of Running Bird because he and Hugh Hunt had come to the parting of the ways, but to a friendship that was very real and very honest, though ever unexpressed. It was then White Flower told Katharine that Yellow Owl's act was the outcome of that time when a daughter of the despised whites had dared to administer magic medicine to a Dakota under the very eyes of the Dakota doctor. That was the one unforgivable affront. He planned the abduction that very night while he stood with folded arms looking down upon the little group at the bedside. He told her father so a long time afterwards. At first, Black Tomahawk could only guess what had happened to Big Neck's daughter. His one great reason for coming out to the hunt was to see if Yellow Owl had done this thing. How the medicine man hated Katharine! He had never forgotten. He had only bided his time.

"What was he going to do with me, White Flower?" Katharine asked once.

CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

"Ask the birds that fly all about us," White Flower answered evasively. "They see more than I do."

"But Black Tomahawk will never let him hurt me now. He never will, will he, White Flower?" Katharine pleaded.

"No, he never will," said White Flower, moodily. She was wishing with all her bitter heart — almost — that there were not something about this girl of the hated race which prevented her — White Flower, the Dreamer — from enticing her away from Black Tomahawk's protection and delivering her to the vengeance of the waiting medicine man.

"When will he send me back to my father and mother? It has been so long! They cry for me every day and think that I am dead. When will he send me back, dear? Ask him!"

"He will never send you back," said White Flower, with a snap of her black eyes. "Not now! He meant to take you back when he found you. We were all going back. My father forced Yellow Owl to give you up. Yellow Owl whined and whined, but my father is a very great chief, and he gave Yellow Owl the best horses in the herd. But then what? Then came the runners, beaten down by the snow and the icy wind. We had to let them rest in our lodges, and we fed them good buffalo stews — otherwise, they would have died from the exposure and could not have gone on to the other camps and villages. What did they say, these runners? That the Great Father had

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

sent for us all to go back to the Agencies, right in the heart of the cruel Winter, before the last day of the New Year month, if we wanted to save ourselves from the ignominy of being declared hostile. Was not my father always friendly to the whites — too friendly? What a return was that for all his goodness! Was he a deer that he could run so fast, or a bird to fly so swiftly? He could not possibly have gotten back so soon even if he could have escaped being lost in the snow storms or frozen to death by the terrible cold. So they said they would fight him to the death. It was only an excuse to get to push the Dakotas off the face of the earth. They said my father was unfriendly. They lied. Did it look like unfriendliness in him, to save you from the vengeance of Yellow Owl and to plan to return you to your home as soon as Spring opened? Do you think he will ever take you back now?"

"But, White Flower," cried Katharine, earnestly, "Black Tomahawk need not be afraid. Does he imagine that any harm could come to him after taking his Agent's daughter safe home? My dear girl, there is not a white man in the world who would touch him after he had done that. Tell him, dear, tell him! There is not one! So much do my people love their own that your father should go free though he were a thousand times a hostile."

"Afraid!" For a moment, it seemed as if White Flower were going to laugh. She checked the impulse and continued scornfully: "Did you think it

CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

was because he was afraid? The Great Father said, 'You cannot come back now. It is too late.' 'Very well,' say the Dakotas, 'it is too late. We will never go back.'"

"My father is not the Great Father at Washington," said Katharine, hopelessly. "He did not issue that unjust and impossible demand. He is your father's friend and yours."

"Perhaps that is why Black Tomahawk did not send you back to live in Yellow Owl's lodge when he found that he could not return to the Agency," said White Flower, with a sage shake of her head. "But he will never let you go home. You shall see. The Dakotas think it is enough."

Most of such conversations between the two girls were carried on in the Dakota language. So intensely desirous of understanding what was going on around her in this savage and, for the most part, unfriendly village was Katharine, that she had early set herself the task of learning to understand and to speak this strange tongue. White Flower, on the other hand, though she undoubtedly understood English long before she would acknowledge it, absolutely refused to converse in that despised language.

On this June day, as the two idled away the long, dreamy, Summer afternoon on the bank of the racing river, a moving dot appeared on the plain to the west. It grew steadily in size and form. It was evidently approaching rapidly. Soon out of the vague and illusive shadow-building of the shimmering distance

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

was evolved the semblance of a man riding swiftly their way. Katharine arose, hurriedly, with a quickly blanching face, the little measure of content she had so hardly won giving way at once to the old fret and fear and rebellion at this sight of a strange savage riding so purposefully toward them. The whole country had been checkered with roving bands of unfriendly Indians since the opening of Spring. They seemed to be increasing in number. Many stopped at the village of Inkipaduta, with whom Black Tomahawk had elected to cast in his lot when he was wantonly barred from his peaceful home on the shores of the distant Missouri. Many were the fierce and lowering glances which were bestowed upon Katharine Mendenhall by these visiting warriors. Such was the bitterness against all whites in that Spring of seventy-six that many demands were made upon Inkipaduta to deliver her to the death; and Black Tomahawk was often put to it to devise ways and means of averting the awful tragedy which was threatening his captive. He was compelled constantly to marshal all his forces of ingenuity and diplomacy to combat successfully the wily suggestions and arguments of his host, and to convince this crafty over-lord that the white girl was his — Black Tomahawk's — to do as he pleased with. He had purchased her. He meant to adopt her. These chance visitors were overstepping all authority in their arrogant demands, and he called upon Inkipaduta to protect him in his rights. In return, he gave solemn assurance that the prisoner should never be sur-

CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

rendered to the enemy. There was no ransom smaller than the complete expulsion of the invaders from the Black Hills and the price of the gold therein that could purchase her deliverance. In those days, Black Tomahawk's old, dreamy, retrospective look had undergone subtle change. His eyes were bright and bold, gleaming with fire and youth, as if, now that at last the great national note had been struck, and the sound of it had arisen as one mighty rallying cry from every camp and village and isolated lodge from the Missouri River to the Big Horn Mountains, he was trying to put himself in the place of one of his boys who had died too soon. On account of this awakening of his fighting spirit, he had won much respect in Inkpaduta's village. So far, his influence for Katharine's safety had prevailed. But if she had sought to escape, or if any had tried to assist her in escaping, not even excepting Black Tomahawk himself, her life would have immediately paid the forfeit. Mutterings of these threats reached Katharine through White Flower. It was no wonder then that fear clutched her heart and that she turned to flee back to the village at sight of a strange warrior who might very easily take her life down here by the river, where there was no one to see.

"Wait a little," said White Flower, with an intent gaze. "Perhaps it is some one we know. Perhaps it is some one from Big Bend. More and more our people come."

Unwilling to linger, and yet afraid to go without

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

White Flower, Katharine stood hesitatingly on the bank and gazed shrinkingly at the horseman. There could be no mistaking his nationality. He rode with the reckless abandon of the Indian. And then, all of a sudden, the blanket horror of all those long, terrible months lifted from Katharine Mendenhall's crushed spirit as a fog lifts at the coming of the sun.

"Running Bird!" she cried tremulously. "It is Running Bird! White Flower, do you hear? It is Running Bird!"

"I know it," said White Flower, composedly. Her Indian eyes must have recognized Running Bird long before Katharine knew him, but she had given no sign. She had not moved from the spot where she and Katharine had been sitting.

Running Bird scarcely paused at the opposite bank, but urged his horse into the swift river at once. He landed some distance below the place where the two girls were waiting. Katharine ran to meet him. Her heart was beating so wildly that she hardly realized what she was doing. Her cheeks burned a deep dusky red beneath the tan of her outdoor life. Her eyes were as bright as stars, shining with the gladdest relief she had ever felt in her life, perhaps. Running Bird dismounted and stood before her. Being an Indian, he gave no demonstrative greeting, showed no emotion at seeing her. If he was surprised, he did not express it in word or manner. He did not see White Flower at all. At least, he did not so much as glance her way.

"Oh, Running Bird, I am so glad, so glad!" cried



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“Oh, Running Bird,” cried Katharine, “do my father and mother know where I am?”

THE WORLD
AT THE
END OF THE
EARTH

CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

Katharine. "Tell me everything! How are my father and mother? How did you get here? Did you know I was here? You have come to help me, have n't you? Why were you so long in coming? Do my father and mother know where I am?"

When she finally paused in her tumultuous and incoherent questionings, exhausted by the very vehemence of them, Running Bird answered her quietly:

"Your father and mother are well, but they grieve all the time. They think that your spirit has stolen away from the earth and will never come back."

"Take me home quickly, Running Bird! Oh, it has been so long! Take me home! Please! Please!"

"Why have you stayed away so long? Why did n't you go home to the parents who have sorrow all the time now?"

"Is it possible that you do not know I am a prisoner?"

"Whose prisoner?"

"I don't know. First, it was Yellow Owl. I thought he was going to kill me. Then, Black Tomahawk came the next Winter and took me away. There is Inkpaduta, too. I don't understand how he is mixed up in it all, but he is the big man of this village and he won't let me go."

"Is Black Tomahawk your friend?"

"Yes, I think he is. I am sure he is. I should have died without him and Smoke Woman and — White Flower."

"Then why does n't he take you home?"

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"I don't know. Oh, I have begged him on my knees! White Flower says he never will because of that impossible order which resulted in his exile. What a monumental blunder that was, Running Bird! But my father was not responsible for it in the least. I am sure of that. I think Black Tomahawk believes in my father, too, and would help me if it were not for Inkpaduta and the rest."

"Black Tomahawk is your friend, but he is only one, and he cannot help you. I am your friend, but I, also, am only one. I came alone. I bear a message for Inkpaduta. How then can I help you?"

"Do you mean — that you aren't going to help me to — get away?" asked Katharine, slowly and confusedly, a bewildered look creeping into her eyes. "I — I — so counted on you, Running Bird."

"You asked me why I have been so long in coming," said the Indian, not answering her directly. "We came many times, but we could not find you. No one knew where Yellow Owl was. Big Neck even sent his soldiers; but the medicine man was too smart to let them see him. At last, Big Neck decided that you must have fallen through the ice; and now he goes about his business again, though he is all the time sad and does not care to eat. But the mother dreams and dreams all day long and in the night, and sees visions, and knows that you are in an Indian camp. She has seen you there many times, she says. So she cannot be content. Last year, after the ice went out, the Missionary and the Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail accom-

CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

panied Running Bird and his braves and all the women and children of the camp into the Powder River country to hunt. They came to seek Sun-in-the-hair."

"What do you mean by the 'man who wouldn't stay in jail'?" asked Katharine, faintly. She was trembling, uncontrollably.

"I mean the man who wouldn't stay in jail because he loved you. He broke out and came away to find you. No white man knows where he is except the Missionary."

"Oh!" was Katharine's only answer. He was safe! No matter how or why or where. He was safe! He had not died for a crime he had never committed. She covered her face with her hands.

"Where is he now?" she asked, at last, eagerly. "Tell him where I am and he will come for me."

"And be shot down before he has fairly started. It is too late now for any white man to hope to find friends among the Dakotas gathering to sweep down like a mighty flood and drive the invaders out of our Hills once and for all time. Where is Yellow Owl now?"

"I don't know," said Katharine, forlornly, her brief hope shattered by this blunt speech. "White Flower said he was a big war chief now at the head of a great army. She said he talked himself into that position. He saw glorious visions of victory and interpreted them to the young warriors. Always the dreams reeked with hate of us whites. Is there really going to be a war, Running Bird, a general up-rising?"

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"For a long time, the young men and the braves have been slipping away from the Agencies. Many went in the Fall, others in the Winter, still some in the Spring. There is no one left but the old men and the women and the children. If the Great Father were not blinded by the fool counsels of his war chiefs, he would look around and see for himself that this is so. He does not dream that we are so many. He has not been able to number those in the buffalo country. They were too wise for him and too wary. And he does not know that so many of us have left the Agencies. His war chiefs walk around a little, see our women making fires and jerking beef, and then they laugh and go away to send this message to him, 'The braves are sleeping in their tipis. They are too lazy to fight and too cowardly.' Meanwhile, signal fires are burning in the Indian country," he concluded, significantly.

"What is to become of me, Running Bird?" asked Katharine, hopelessly. The disappointment was almost more than she could bear.

The young Indian shrugged his shoulders.

"The white soldiers are already on the march. They are headed toward the mouth of the Powder. They are coming from all directions. Our scouts know where they are all the time. Your General Terry left Fort Abraham Lincoln some time ago. He will be here soon, and so will that insolent General Custer who found our gold and who is much to blame for this war. A steamboat is coming up the Yellowstone with supplies for this army. The Slender Ash and the Man-who-

CAMP OF THE DAKOTAS

wouldn't-stay-in-jail are on that boat. Perhaps — hush — we will talk again. See, the people from the village are coming down to the shore. They have heard that a stranger has arrived. They are curious for the news. They must not know that I am your friend. I will tell them that you used to see me once in awhile at the Agency and knew that I could talk English, and so you were asking me questions about your people."

He subsided into low guttural exclamations indicative of a desire not to be questioned by this woman of the hated enemy and turned away, leading his horse up the bank to meet the interested groups straggling down from the village.

"Does Running Bird go to join Inkipaduta and Black Tomahawk for the fighting?" asked White Flower, casually, as he passed her.

"My young men are already with Black Moon and Gall," said Running Bird, without stopping. "I shall join them soon on the Little Big Horn."

Now Black Moon was the acknowledged leader of the heathen element. A little smile played about White Flower's lips.

"Yellow Owl has gone to join Black Moon, too," she vouchsafed, with an air of languid indifference.

"So?" He was little interested in the medicine man now.

"Yes, and Mad Wolf is with Yellow Owl," she concluded, carelessly, and went on braiding grasses.

CHAPTER XXII

WHITE FLOWER MAKES A PROMISE

“**F**OOLISH, foolish White Flower, why did n't you come and talk with your lover before all those people came?” chided Katharine, hastening to where the Indian girl still braided her grasses, while Running Bird continued his journey afoot to Inkpaduta's village, surrounded by a crowd of curious Santees and Yanktonais who, remnants of the Outbreak, had gathered under the bloody leadership of that lawless Wahpekute.

There was a new elasticity in her step, a new light in her eyes, for, though Running Bird had promised nothing, he was Hugh Hunt's friend — and the Missionary and Locke Raynor were near; they had never given up the quest.

White Flower vouchsafed no reply. The immobility of her countenance, however, did not necessarily signify tranquillity of thought. In truth, her wild little heart was beating time to a wonderful tune, the burden of whose glad refrain was ever, “He will fight with Black Moon — he has come back to us. He will fight with Black Moon — he has come back to us.” Mingled with her triumph, too, was some condescending

A P R O M I S E

pity for this white girl, an unwilling liking for whom, she had tried so hard to conceal. It was the Indian who was in the ascendancy now. He was coming into his own at last. Her thoughts went even farther than pity. With a new and strange magnanimity which would have been impossible to her hating heart before Katharine's sojourn in Black Tomahawk's lodge, she decided that, when the time came, she would save her adopted sister from death — if she could.

From girlish raillery, Katharine passed quickly to a passionate appeal for help to escape. Hitherto, the thought of an attempt to get away and of being lost in the hostile country had been more horrible to Katharine than even her continued and enforced residence among Indians where, at least, she had powerful protection in the person of Black Tomahawk. Now, however, the outlook was changed. Somewhere near were her friends. The knowledge that they were so near put her into a fever of impatience to find them — to leave this awful place at once and forever so that the memory of it might the more quickly pass into that receptacle of the mind where one remembers some things only as one does bad dreams. She confided to White Flower everything that Running Bird had said. She besought her with tears in her eyes to use her influence to prevail upon him to help; but White Flower expressed herself not at all upon the subject. Depressed and discouraged, Katharine followed the Indian girl back to camp.

A number of young warriors of the village had just returned from the hunt with fresh buffalo meat. Smoke

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

Woman was slicing some of it and hanging it up to dry in the sun on lines prepared for it outside the tipi. Katharine went at once to her assistance. She should never cease being grateful to the chief and his family for rescuing her from the awful horror of her life with Yellow Owl. Many a task, she voluntarily assumed, thus materially lightening Smoke Woman's labors; and one had only to watch the way the Indian woman's eyes followed Katharine about in her graceful and grateful performance of these menial duties to know how content Smoke Woman was with the presence of this white girl in the lodge.

That evening, shortly after dark, while Katharine was dreaming before a smouldering fire in front of the tipi, her mind teeming with the possibilities of escape which the appearance of Running Bird had suggested to her, she was startled by feeling a stealthy hand laid on her shoulder. She sprang to her feet in terror, the ever present fear of the menacing looks of certain of Inkipaduta's warriors immediately printing upon her brain the likeness of some hideous abductor. It was only White. Flower, however. Running Bird was standing a few feet away. There was no mistaking him, in spite of the darkness. He stood erect and motionless, seemingly self-absorbed. So had he appeared on that night of storm when he came to conduct the wayfarers of the stranded steamer to shelter; and hope set Katharine's heart to beating wildly. She was glad she had not screamed. If she had, probably Running Bird would have glided away into the darkness, and he

A P R O M I S E

might have found no other opportunity to help her. She must try never to scream any more until she was safe on the other side of the river again. She must forget nervousness, fear, and weakness, if she would have the aid and the respect of her Dakota friends. Oh, she was glad, glad that she had not cried aloud!

White Flower was alarmingly unconcerned, but still Katharine hoped against hope, seeing in the girl's very naturalness something of Indian stealth and cunning which might hide a real purpose. Without further notice of her, White Flower strolled carelessly toward the river and Katharine followed her silently.

It was a warm, heavily sweet June night, and many Indians lounged without their tipis. Here and there, spots of light alternately glowed and darkened as the men smoked dreamily and luxuriously. For the most part, the village was quiet — not yet steeped in sleep, but just resting as if prescient of the great unrest which was so soon to sweep over the hearts and minds and actions of the whole turbulent race in the West. No one molested the girls in any way though several watched their flitting with eyes in which dwelt silent speculation. Not one was afraid because White Flower had an Indian heart and all knew it. By and by, Katharine became aware that some one was following them. She could not keep back a little gasp of dread though her reason told her that it must be Running Bird. It was Running Bird, and when they were near the river, he overtook them and spoke to Katharine in English.

"The Slender Ash is my friend," he said, abruptly.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"The Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail is his friend, and Sun-in-the-hair is the Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail's friend, and I am Sun-in-the-hair's friend," he proceeded, gravely polite, "so we are all friends. It is like a circle. There is no beginning and no end."

"Unless we count the Slender Ash as the beginning and the end," said Katharine, in a low, moved voice. Running Bird's addressing her altogether in English warned her that the night has ears in the hostile Indian country, and she fell to trembling at every soft chirp of a night-bird or the rustling through the grass of some thirsty animal — a dog from the camp maybe — going down to the river to drink, but suggestive of a stealthy, moccasined foot. "How well you have named him! Slender of body, but strong of soul! I pray that I may be forgiven for my weakness in sometimes thinking that I was forgotten. The time was so long, Running Bird! So long! But I ought to have known that the Missionary would not forget me. He has sent you to me at last. I thank God!"

"Neither has Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail forgotten," said Running Bird, significantly. "He got much thin last Summer. Some day he will go back to the jail. He not live long, though. He think all the time. He will die. The white people are trying to drive the Dakotas from the earth. That, they can never do. They have broken the Treaty, as they broke all the others in their turn, and have laughed out loud because we are so easily fooled. That, they *can* do — it is easy to lie — but they will be much sorry. All this is not

A P R O M I S E

the fault of Slender Ash, Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail, or Sun-in-the-hair. This I know. Therefore, though I have taken the war-path against the Treaty-breakers, I will first help these friends to find each other."

"Oh, God will bless you for this, Running Bird!" cried Katharine, pressing his folded hands impulsively with her own browned ones.

"The Government boat is coming up the Yellowstone," continued Running Bird. "I do not know what are the plans of the Slender Ash and the Man-who-would n't-stay-in-jail after this boat makes its junction with the army. Maybe they will follow the soldiers. Maybe they will go out alone somewhere. If they go out alone, they will likely die. I have been thinking much. I think I will go find the boat now. Last Summer, I was with my white friends. This Summer, I could not be because I have joined the war party. I have found you when I was not looking for you. I think I will tell them. They will be very glad. I will find the boat."

"Won't you take me with you?" whispered Katharine, pleadingly.

"I cannot. They are watching me now. They are much suspicious. I must come back for you when they do not know that I am around. Sun-in-the-hair will stay and help White Flower."

"How can I help her, Running Bird?" asked Katharine, wonderingly.

White Flower had thrown herself upon the ground

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

and was apparently totally uninterested in the conversation.

"Black Tomahawk has promised her to High Dog, a young warrior of Inkipaduta's camp. High Dog gave him many fine presents."

"But Black Tomahawk has always liked you best of all!" cried Katharine, astonished. "Now that you are come back, he will be glad to give White Flower to you."

"He has promised High Dog," said Running Bird. Hidden by the dark, his eyes gleamed with savage unreconcilment to the chief's decree and determination to circumvent it. "White Flower told him she would never marry me because I was a friend to the whites, so he promised High Dog. He is bound. High Dog has given many fine presents. Black Tomahawk does not care to offend him. High Dog wants White Flower very bad, but he shall never have her. I am going to fight with Black Moon and Gall and all those brave Uncpapas, so White Flower has promised to marry me now. When I have found the boat, I will come back for Sun-in-the-hair and White Flower."

"I will try to keep her for you, Running Bird," said Katharine, softly and earnestly, "and, oh, you won't forget to come back, will you?"

"I shall not forget," said Running Bird.

He turned back toward the village. He must get his horse and be off at once. He stood a moment before his wilful sweetheart without speaking. Katharine courageously started back by herself. She would give

A P R O M I S E

them their farewell alone. If she walked slowly, it was probable that White Flower would soon overtake her. The Indian girl arose and herself stood silent before her lover, her eyes downcast.

"The dance weakness is all past," said Running Bird, at last, in low-voiced Dakota. "I shall not wait for the wind to blow that little White Flower into my arms this time. I am so strong again that it is thus I will take her," and he drew her unresisting into the close clasp of his longing arms.

"I wish you could take me now," whispered White Flower, clinging to him. "I am afraid of the Slender Ash. He will take you from me again."

"Never fear," said Running Bird, caressingly. "Nothing or no one can take you from me now. I have thought much and much is clear to me at last that bothered me before. When I fight home-stealers and land-grabbers and treaty-breakers, I know now that I am not fighting the Slender Ash or his Man on the Cross. They are not the same. They are far from being the same; so I shall fight. Oh, little White Flower, little White Flower, do not be afraid," he whispered, passionately, bending his handsome head till his lips caressed her dark hair. "It is all clear to me now. There is no more doubt. I know what it is best for me to do. First, I shall come back for you. You must keep yourself for me, little one. Promise me that you will."

"I promise," she said, softly.

"And then I shall go with our people and drive the

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

proud and greedy invaders out of our land, and then — and then —” his voice breaking with its happy burden of love and prophecy and the joyous relief which follows decision after uncertainty, “ my lodge will not be empty any more. It will sing for joy.”

Presently, he released her, and she returned to the village with Katharine.

A few days later, early in the evening, Katharine observed signs of excitement in camp. It seemed to pervade the very atmosphere. Almost the entire population was outside the tipis. New wood had been heaped high upon dying fires until the flames were leaping skyward, and the whole village was alight. There was much talking. Even the dogs seemed to have caught the general infection and were answering each other from far and near in fatuous baying. It was not long before she understood the cause of the commotion. The heralds were going the rounds of the village proclaiming that at daylight the camp would take up its march to join the forces gathering for war. Running Bird's message from Black Moon had evidently precipitated the move. The time was at hand to put in motion the greatest concentrated force in the history of the Dakota nation.

Meanwhile, the *Far West*, chartered by the Government to carry supplies for the armies on the march, had climbed the Yellowstone River to Stanley's Stockade. On board were the Missionary and Locke Raynor, working as common hands, messing with the crew. Only so had they been able to obtain passage on the boat, and

A P R O M I S E

yet travel incognito, as they must do for Locke's sake. The captain alone knew their secret and their mission, and he had consented to the arrangement for Hugh Hunt's sake. They were compelled to rely upon themselves and their own ingenuity now that Running Bird had identified himself with the war party. A rumor among the Indians on the Reservation that Spring to the effect that Katharine Mendenhall was known by different ones to be with the hostiles in the Powder River country had determined them to trust themselves in the wilderness alone. What they should do when the boat reached the end of its prescribed journey, they had not as yet decided. They only knew that they should go on somehow, someway, somewhere. Both faced the exceeding likelihood of never returning, but they faced it unflinchingly, calm in the absolute inevitability — as they looked at it — of the only course which was now theirs to pursue.

If Locke Raynor ever thought, as he had once or twice in the old days, that the Missionary loved Katharine Mendenhall and therefore his untiring efforts in her behalf might not be altogether so disinterested as they seemed, he dismissed the thought as unworthy; but he could not help wondering, as he had often wondered before, when he saw the serenity with which the Missionary bent his slight frame to the toil on the boat, or threw himself on his rough bunk at night, grimy from constant contact with the machinery, and so tired that he had only time to smile cheerily up at his fellow-laborer before dropping off into heavy slumber. He

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

did not know that Hugh Hunt had asked and answered for himself long ago this question: "Is there anything to keep me from following Running Bird into the Powder River country again?"

They lay over at Stanley's Stockade several days. While there, a messenger came from General Terry with instructions for the steamer to move up the Yellowstone and make a junction with the troops at the mouth of the Powder. On the seventh day of June, the *Far West* tied to the bank of that river.

CHAPTER XXIII

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

MUCH disturbed by the announcement of the heralds, fearful that her friends would not be able to trace the moving camp or to follow it into the heart of the war district whither it was tending, Katharine crept into the temporarily deserted lodge to indulge in the gloomiest forebodings which had been hers since she had been removed from Yellow Owl's guardianship. Here White Flower found her. The rest of the family were out somewhere joining in the revels with which the village was celebrating the welcome order to march. White Flower's eyes were full of angry tears, and there was a frightened look on her face.

"High Dog is coming for me in the morning," she said, forgetting all enmity in her knowledge that Katharine's sympathy was with her and Running Bird. "My father thinks Running Bird will not come back. He says I would not take him when I could and that now it is too late. He will wait for him no longer. High Dog gave him many fine presents, and so I must go to High Dog. My father is much changed since we left the Agency. High Dog says he wants me now so that if he is killed in the war, there will be some one to mourn.

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

for him. Oh," she interrupted herself, with a scornful stamp of her foot, "he is of a very great and powerful family — there will be plenty to mourn for him. I, too, gave a promise, as well as my father. I promised Running Bird. I will not go to High Dog's lodge or travel with him and his relatives to-morrow. He can mourn for himself if he can find no one else to do it for him. I am going to run away."

"When?" asked Katharine, not in the least believing her.

"To-night," said White Flower, resolutely. "Running Bird is hunting for the boat somewhere between the mouth of the Powder and the mouth of the Yellowstone. I can find him. I promised I would keep myself for him. There are many who would be very glad to go to High Dog's lodge. Let him choose one of those. You are good. You are kind to the Dakotas. You are Running Bird's friend. You have not laughed at me because I am an Indian. You have taught me many things. It is on account of all these things that, when we have found your brave and his friend, we will come back for you. I would not have done this for you at first, but now, I have changed my mind. Your medicine was good. At first, I was afraid; but now, I know that it was good. I am grateful. Do not tell anybody that I told you I was going away. It will be better for you if no one knows."

It was late when White Flower rose from her couch and stole from the tent. Outside, in the brush, she had hidden her pack, consisting principally of a small robe

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

and a bundle of dried meat. Slinging this across her shoulder, she was on the point of moving cautiously off, when she was startled by seeing the figure of Katharine rise up before her in the pale starlight.

"Hush, not a word!" warned Katharine. "I am going with you. It would be found out somehow that I knew about you going. High Dog will be hot for revenge for this affront. Running Bird will be suspected at once, and, if I stayed, I should be put to death before ever he had a chance to come back. Don't try to prevent me, White Flower, just lead the way!"

"They will kill you if they catch us," said White Flower solemnly. "You had much better wait till your man comes for you."

"He could never find me now that the camp is going to move. How would he dare come farther? Oh, do come away before we are missed!"

The Indian girl plainly hesitated. From the farthest confines of the village came the sound of weird music and dancing, and of strange yelps and cries, where a group of war-crazed bucks were still celebrating in honor of the coming strife. The very hysteria of war was upon them. The spirit of it had permeated every nook and corner of the unceded territory, and the call to move forward was as torch to powder. The madness broke out in many celebrations, in much dancing, and in a frenzy of boastings. Fevered as were the warriors of Inkpaduta's camp by the prospect of war, could Black Tomahawk hope always to hold this white prisoner from their fury? But what mattered it to White

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Flower if Katharine thus fell a victim to the righteous up-rising of the Dakotas? Moreover, there was as much danger in going as in staying, and the tenderfoot would sadly hamper White Flower in her own efforts to get away. Her mind was torn with conflicting thoughts and emotions; and, in the end, she said nothing, made no decision. She simply turned and glided away into the darkness in the direction farthest removed from the revellers; and Katharine, with a little catch in her breath, but fully determined, followed her.

They walked or ran all night. Dawn found Katharine footsore and spent with fatigue. Without the rigorous training of her life among the Dakotas, she must have fallen by the way long since. If White Flower was wearied, she made no mention of it. They concealed themselves in a thicket, ate sparingly of the dried meat, and lay down for a little rest. It was not for long. A great dread inspired Katharine with powers of endurance which astonished her even in the strain of her fears and which, under happier circumstances, she never could have maintained. They made steadily for the mouth of the Powder, hugging the timber to blind the sight of pursuers. Briers pricked and tore and caught at the fringe of their antelope-skin garments. Warned by the Indian girl, Katharine was careful to leave no frayed fragment behind to give evidence of the course which they had pursued. Fallen trees tripped her, and many times she fell prostrate, only to pick herself up and blindly follow White Flower who was relentless in maintaining her rapid and unerring

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

way toward the mouth of the river. Stones bruised her moccasined feet and gave her much pain, but she bit her lip desperately and pressed on. Sometimes they were compelled to cross a patch of sun-blistered prairie, and then how the heat bit and stung, and how her heart was in her throat all the way until the friendly gloom of the timber received them once more in its kindly embrace! White Flower never trusted herself to the open without first reconnoitring with all the cunning of her race, and the action never failed to bring vividly to Katharine's mind the awfulness of what the sight of pursuers would be. But White Flower never once stopped to encourage or to question, and Katharine needed a little help — oh, how she needed a little help! She was so alone and so helpless. It might have been better had she remained with Black Tomahawk. But no! She shuddered, hearing again in imagination the blood-curdling sounds which had issued from the inclosure where many savages were keeping horrible vigil, and rallied her oozing courage to stumble on.

In the afternoon of that day they discerned a small group of horsemen off to the right. Fortunately, the girls were in the timber when they espied the terrifying spectacle, and they crept in among a thick growth of brush and waited with bated breath and wildly beating hearts. White Flower's Indian eyes had recognized the distant riders as her own kinsmen. Was it possible that, in their eagerness to join the other war parties, Inkpaduta's fierce warriors had been content to leave the pursuit to Black Tomahawk's own people, trusting

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

them to bring back the rebellious women and to overtake the camp on its westward march? Her savage courage kept Katharine from fainting, even while the white girl recognized the fact that her situation and White Flower's were altogether different. Death was not staring White Flower in the face. Capture would mean for her only — High Dog's lodge, if he would have her after this; but for Katharine, surely, it would mean the end. If only the soldiers marching from Fort Abraham Lincoln would hasten and engage all the Indians in battle right away so they could find no time to think of the runaways! Vain wish! Many days must elapse before the blessed sound of marching men and the trot of cavalry would echo on that terror-haunted land, or the glorious glimpse of the Stars and Stripes make fair and comforting all the dread landscape. Oh, something was wrong somewhere, as Hugh Hunt had said, but it was not the soldiers of the most fearless, the most stainless, and the fairest flag that ever floated over the portals of native land! If they could only come now!

The girls dared take no chances. They lay in their hiding-place, scarcely breathing, until night once more covered their movements. During all that time, they heard no sound other than that of the rushing river, the light snapping of twigs as birds hopped hither and thither in the branches of the trees, the soft rustling of a snake through the grass, and once a coyote slunk down to drink, unconscious of human presence so still were they. When it was quite dark, they came

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

from their place of concealment and pressed forward with little rest all that night.

On the second day after Black Tomahawk's unsuccessful scout, a little past noon, themselves unseen, they beheld three horsemen coming from the north. Though they were constantly on the lookout for their friends, at this distance they were unable to determine whether the approaching riders were Indians or white men. They dropped down behind the bank and waited. When the newcomers were close enough for identification, and when Katharine saw who they really were, she had not a word to say. She had not dared to hope, and now she was afraid that she would wake up and find it just a dream, as she had all those other times when she dreamed these men to her rescue. She stood up unsteadily, but she made no movement forward. Her poor, pinched, brown face, once so fair and so delicately colored, held an appealing expression of unbelief.

And Locke? "At last," he said, under his breath. That was all. There was no other word of greeting — just, "At last!" He could never remember dismounting, but he never forgot the moment when he took Katharine Mendenhall in his arms. He had waited very long — his disappointments had been very many and very bitter. He held her close. His cheek rested upon her soft hair, she lay against his breast, spent with the long journey but home at last. For him there was nothing else in all the world just then, neither time nor eternity, friendly nor hostile, justice nor injustice, no

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

dread sentence of death, no prison house, no sacred word of honor; there was only this girl, dearer than life or a thousand lives — his mate whom he had lost for a bitter while, and whom he had found again. His lips caressed her hair; and then at last, very gently, he lifted her face and kissed her sweet and trembling mouth. It was then she broke down and wept softly for all her trouble ended.

Presently, the reunited friends held council together, and it was decided to proceed to the mouth of the Powder as rapidly as possible, hoping to find the *Far West* still there. The captain had promised them a small boat in which, under cover of night, hiding by day, they would drift down the Yellowstone to the Missouri, and then down the Missouri to Big Bend, unless they had the good fortune to meet with a down-going steamer at some one of the forts. Katharine and White Flower rode, Running Bird scouted a little ahead, while Hugh and Locke walked beside the girls, leading the third horse to which they had transferred all the camp outfit belonging to both parties.

That evening they camped at a small creek which emptied into the river. In spite of the greater safety of travelling after dark, they decided to spend the night here. One look into Katharine Mendenhall's white face had convinced Locke of the impracticability of proceeding farther without rest.

After supper, prepared by Locke and the Missionary, and peculiarly appetizing to Katharine as the first white cooking she had tasted in many months, Locke and

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

Katharine strolled a little way up the river. It was just getting dusk. Running Bird, carefully covering the fire, looked after them thoughtfully but said nothing. They had much to say to each other, these two. They forgot time and place. Locke walked with his arm close around her. She was very tired, and it was a long, weary while since she had had some one to lean upon, to be responsible for her, to tell her what to do, to love her; and how she had needed some one!

"Yes," said Locke, after a while, in answer to a question she had asked, "just as soon as I see you safe in your father's house, back I must go to jail — but I trust it will not be for long," he added, quickly, seeing her sudden stricken look.

"But the — verdict," she whispered, chokingly.

"Oh, but I'm to have a new trial, you know," he said, cheerfully.

"Locke," said Katharine, choking back her sobs and speaking firmly, while her eyes looked unfalteringly into his, "I have learned many things in these more than fifteen months with the Indians. One of the things is, that I do not believe one is called upon to endure that injustice which means the cutting off of one's existence just because those, in whose hands it is to mete out the justice of the world, have seen through a glass, darkly. If the Dakotas had submitted to this lawless confiscation which we are trying to force upon them, that is what it would mean for them. They have a right to resist it. And if you go back — when you never did it — oh, Locke," her voice broke in spite of

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

herself, "I am afraid that is what it will mean for you. I think you have a right not to go back."

He shook his head smilingly.

"Locke," she said, steadily, "if you will stay lost on the Reservation, I will stay with you."

"You — you — don't mean that," said Locke, in a shaking voice. Never to be parted from her again! To be with her forever and forever! Oh, if he only could! "Oh, my darling, my darling, you don't mean it! You must not tempt me. I cannot stay. I promised myself when I took my own parole. But I will come back for you, my girl. It will not be long."

He kissed her hair, her eyes, and her lips, a little blindly, while she clung to him tremulously.

When at last he looked up, the dusk had thickened. He was surprised to find that they must have come some distance from camp. The lay of the land was different and there was open country to their left, across the river.

"We must go back at once," he said, quickly. "I was a brute to bring you so far, when you are so tired. We must have strayed half a mile."

As they turned to retrace their steps, Locke glanced casually toward that stretch of open country; and then something cold and clammy seemed to fasten upon his heart. Not for his own sake. In that awful moment, his one thought was for the girl who, through such trial and vicissitude as he could not think upon without the smarting tears coming into his eyes, had come to

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

him for haven, and he had not been worthy the trust. He had brought her to this! For a moment, his brain reeled, and he was incapable of connected thought or action. The whole West seemed swarming with Indians, and it was not so dark but that he could plainly see from their actions that the mounted band had discovered their presence. The foremost of the Indians seemed to consult together for a moment, and then the whole, hideous crew bore down upon them, brandishing rifles, racing their ponies wildly. It was evident that the savages saw no need of caution, of reconnoitring, of slipping up to lie in ambush. One man and one woman standing helplessly before the onslaught was not good proof of an army back of them; and, besides, scouts doubtless kept all war parties constantly informed as to the exact locations of the different advancing armies. Oh, for Running Bird's influence now! Oh, for the safety of the hidden camp in the thicket, too far removed for any hope of help! Better, far better, for Katharine, had she never left the friendly Yanktonais chief, only to fall into a snare like this, because he, Locke Raynor, was a fool! "Oh," he groaned, "must she die on account of me?" Katharine was staring at him with wide, terror-stricken eyes. Every vestige of color had left her face. Her absolute helplessness steadied him then and drove the horror and momentary indecision from his brain.

"Come," he said, firmly, leading her quickly back into the timber, out of sight of the Indians, "there is

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

one chance. It is a slim one but we must take it. Ask no questions. Do just as I tell you. No matter what it is, do it! Do you understand?"

At this point, the banks on both sides of the river were steep. He helped her down to the water's edge. About fifty feet from the shore were a number of black-looking rocks rising above the surface of the water. From the appearance of the water as it ran past these stones, Locke judged that it was comparatively shallow at that place.

"We must reach those rocks," he said, so decidedly, that, for the first time, Katharine felt a faint hope stirring within her. "First, I must have your promise not to hang back at anything I say. What we do, we must do at once. Otherwise, we are lost. Whatever I say, do! Promise!"

She nodded dumbly.

It was a terrible risk — a criminal one, had not anything been better than that Katharine should fall into the hands of war-maddened Sioux. He realized that, if the water was too deep to wade for the greater part of the distance, the current being so swift, he might not be able to swim so far with her, weighted down as they both would be with their clothing. There was no other way, however. He had given up lashing himself for his foolhardiness. He dared not waste thought or energy on anything which would not count for them then.

"I will save you if I can," he whispered, gently, holding her close a moment. "Trust me, my darling. If

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

it is not to be, it is good to go together. But trust me, little girl, only trust me. I think I can save you yet."

When he kissed her, both knew that the chances were the other way, and that the kiss was the seal of a solemn good-bye.

"Good-bye," whispered Katharine, with the saddest of sad little smiles. "Don't let them get me, Locke. Remember — to let me drown."

"They shall never get you alive," said Locke, quietly.

He stooped at the brink and gathered up a handful of black, sticky mud. This he quickly smeared over his face, stooped for more, and subjected Katharine's to the same treatment. Then he led her into the stream. She did not hesitate but bravely waded in. She trusted him implicitly. She meant to obey him absolutely. The water grew rapidly deeper. When it swirled about her waist, she could not repress a gasp of shivering dread, but she struggled on desperately, clinging to Locke. When they were half-way across, the water came to her chin, and in her eyes were despair and death; but Locke lifted her from her feet and held her up until it became too deep even for him. Then, he struck out vigorously with his free hand. Soon, letting his feet down once more, he found, to his unbounded relief, that he could touch bottom.

Gradually, the water grew more and more shallow. Reaching the rocks at last and feeling around until he found a depth to suit his purpose, he ordered Katharine to sit down. She did so, too dazed to wonder, bent only

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

on listening for that quiet, strong, self-reliant voice, and keeping herself strong enough to understand it and to obey it. He sat down beside her. Seated so, the water gurgled around their necks. They were facing down-stream.

"Now, lean back on your hands," he commanded. "Throw your head back so. Leave only enough of your face exposed to allow you to breathe. Farther, my girl! Don't be afraid of the water. It is our salvation. Like this — do just like this, dear," he said, throwing himself back as he had told her to do. "I don't believe they will ever see us, if we can only hold out. It is getting pretty dark now. Our faces in the twilight will look just like the rocks. We are sunken rocks, little girl, we must act the part."

"It's — it's so cold," said Katharine, with chattering teeth.

"It won't be long now," whispered Locke, encouragingly.

Except for the soft gliding and purling of the water, the evening was very still. They could plainly hear the Indians rapidly approaching the west bank. From the sounds carried to them so distinctly, it seemed to Locke that the redskins must have halted directly opposite them, and for a moment, his heart almost stopped beating. The voices were so loud and clear. Surely, the Indians must be looking right down at them. He had done a very foolish thing in thinking that he might hide from them in this way. In a few moments, the savages began racing up and down the bank. This

KATHARINE AND LOCKE

continued for some time, the pound of the ponies' hoofs coming to those in hiding heart-clutchingly clear and defined over the water and in the evening quiet. Finally, there was a mighty splashing, and Locke concluded that the Indians were crossing a little way above them. Soon, it seemed that most of them were on the east side and were racing up and down that bank. They were much nearer now, and he knew that the critical time had come. The water swishing around the stones made considerable noise, and he began to whisper encouraging words to Katharine. Her teeth were chattering with the cold, and her poor little face under its daub of dirt looked blue and pinched. His heart ached to see her so, and he ground his teeth in real rage to think that he was powerless to help her.

"Locke," she said, very faintly, "I'm afraid it's good-bye, at last. I — can't hold out much longer. I am so tired. When I give up, don't try to save me. Remember, we should only both lose our lives then — and — you know — I must n't be taken by the Indians. You must remember, Locke, for I shall give up pretty soon now."

"Wait just a little longer, dear, please," he pleaded. "It is almost dark enough now for us to risk sitting up straight. I think they will give up the search soon. They do not seem to have been attracted to these rocks at all. Don't give up, little girl, not yet — *Katharine!*" he ended, sharply, for the little head had sunk beneath the murmuring water.

He caught her strongly with one arm, remembering

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

caution even then when he thought that all was lost, forced her into a sitting posture and held her firmly to his side. She strangled a little but that was all. It might well have seemed only the water murmuring around the rocks.

Gradually, all sound died away, other than this soft gliding of the river, the coo of a dove, the distant cry of a wolf. It grew quite dark. The wild riders had dispersed, leaving a silence so profound that it was like a heaviness. Were they altogether gone, or were those black, mysterious woods and banks peopled with a still, waiting company? "My merciful God, if I only knew!" was the cry of Locke's soul. An hour passed away — two hours. Nothing happened but denser darkness, denser stillness. It was easier sitting straight; but as Locke felt the paralyzing chill creeping over him more and more, he thought much of Katharine's silent suffering. He was afraid she would die of the terrible chill.

He rose to his feet. His limbs were so stiff that he staggered, and Katharine was a dead weight in his arms; but she smiled and whispered, "I tried to mind you," and he thanked God that she still lived. He rubbed his arms and legs softly until life came back to them.

"Hold me so, dear," he said, then, putting her arm around his shoulders. "I am going to take you to shore now."

Though the shadows seemed haunted to their imaginations, the night remained serene and undisturbed as they climbed the bank.

CHAPTER XXIV

RUNNING BIRD COMES INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

THEY met Running Bird coming to meet them. He asked no questions, and his silence expressed grave disapproval. It was only after Locke had explained the reason of their long absence that the Indian unbent sufficiently to speak; and then all he said was:

"I think the Man-who-would n't stay-in-jail had better stay there next time. It would be safer for him and for Sun-in-the-hair."

The sarcasm was obvious. It hurt, and Locke again began bitterly to condemn his thoughtlessness. A gentle pressure on his arm stayed him.

"Please don't," whispered Katharine. "After what you did, it is not right that you should so censure yourself. I — cannot bear that you should. You — you — saved my life, Locke." Her voice almost died away in the stress of her emotion.

"And besides," put in Running Bird, bluntly, as he stalked stealthily ahead, "the night has ears, and foolish talk can be easily heard."

When they arrived at the camp, where there was no sign of fire or light, nothing but thick darkness, it was Hugh Hunt who told them, in a low voice that was no

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

louder than the whispering of the river, how they had heard the Indians as they slipped by on their way south, but had not dared to make their presence known, in the hope of ascertaining whether or not the Indians had stumbled upon Locke and Katharine, for fear of giving them away if, by any chance, they had managed to secrete themselves before they were seen. They hardly hoped the missing ones had been so fortunate, but they dared take no chances.

"No," Running Bird had said, "when they have gone, we will search for our friends. If we find them dead, we should have gained nothing by showing ourselves. If we find them unhurt, all is well. If we find them not at all, then I will follow after my people alone and—do what I can. Your cross is not very popular just now, Slender Ash."

The time had been very long. They had not dared call aloud for fear that the Indians had not really gone. The search had thus been carried on under extreme difficulties. They had found no trace of a scuffle or of an encounter of any kind. They had never once thought of the river. Running Bird had finally decided to leave White Flower and Hugh in camp, and, after one more trip up the river, to mount and take after the savages. It was on this last scout that he met Locke and Katharine.

Once more, the little party held consultation. This time, it was agreed that they must go on—they must have the night for their travelling time. Daylight must find them many miles away from the spot where a white

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

man and woman had been seen of an Indian war party. Who could say that some of them or all of them might not come creeping back in the morning to see if they could not get some light upon the mysterious disappearance which was so absolute and so unexplainable that it was like jugglery? If they came back and found the little camp, what could Running Bird do against so many, mad with the blood frenzy? But when they would have gathered in the horses, they found, to their dismay, that the horses were gone.

"They have stolen them. That is all the more reason for our going at once," said Locke, decidedly.

"Much depends upon your grit and endurance, Miss Mendenhall," said Hugh, gravely.

"Don't stop for me," said Katharine, stoutly, though she was so chilled that her voice shook in spite of her. "It will be warmer walking and — I could not bear to wait for them to come back."

The loss of their horses was a serious handicap. "Still, better they than we," said Hugh, cheerfully.

Before starting, Katharine wrung the water out of her dripping hair as best she could, and, with White Flower's aid, removed her soaked frock and improvised a dry one out of a blanket, laughed, and said she was ready and very comfortable. Locke also dried himself as well as he could under the circumstances — Running Bird would not permit a fire — and the little party once more set off on its weary march. Running Bird cautioned them all to absolute silence, and then took his place in the rear — the war party had gone south —

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

while, to the surprise and dissatisfaction of the white men, White Flower assumed the position in the lead.

"Let her alone," said Running Bird, briefly, when they would have remonstrated. "I told her. Even a Dakota woman hears better than a white person."

"I cannot let a woman take the place of danger," said Locke, decidedly. "I am pretty good at a scout. Let me —"

"Lead us into the river again?" interrupted Running Bird, cuttingly. He admired profoundly the strategy which had outwitted his own countrymen, but he held in much contempt the judgment of the man which had made this desperate chance necessary. Another time, he might not be so successful in extricating himself from the meshes of his own weaving. So Locke had to be content with the Indian's decision.

They moved forward that night as rapidly as was possible without horses and in the wet and bedraggled condition of two of the party. The following day, they remained in hiding. So they planned their journey — to travel by night and to hide by day. They slept much in turn and felt rested and refreshed again before night came on. The warm June sun filtering through the foliage of their place of concealment soon completely dried Katharine's frock of antelope skin, and she declared herself ready for anything, now that she was once more clothed in the garments of respectability.

They arrived at the mouth of the Powder only to find rippling water where the *Far West* had ridden at

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

anchor, and the ashes of dead camp-fires where those gallant soldiers whom Katharine Mendenhall had so longed to see had stopped for a little while. The men had been very merry and determined, except just once in a rare while when they thought wistfully of far-away Eastern homes and sweet-faced mothers with soft gray hair and waiting wives; then they had gone on their march again up the river to the Rosebud; then on that fatal scout from whence so many were to slip, with the little fighting smile of the American soldier, into the Great Beyond. Little did these friends dream then, however, of what a few days would bring to those light-hearted boys who had passed that way a short time ago, but who would never pass that way again. The deserted camp-fires made the place seem lonelier than before, though the soldiers had come and gone between times, and the members of the party had seen them not.

Anticipating their not being able to accomplish their mission in time to find the steamer still there, Locke and Hugh had persuaded the captain to promise to leave a small boat in concealment for their use. Had he kept his word? What if he had changed his mind? What if it had been discovered by skulking savages? It took courage to make the search, but the boat was there; and it seemed to Locke that their troubles were fairly well over. He did not belittle the hazard of drifting by night down the swift and turbulent Yellowstone, swollen by the June rise, constantly menaced by snags and rapids as they would be; but he felt that so far as any man could have power over that hungry element

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

of nature, water, he had it, after his years of training at the oars — to say nothing of his natural liking for it and his aptitude at learning its secrets. The ocean and swift mountain streams had always appealed to him strongly. He felt confident of his ability to steer their little craft through the perils of the downward way.

Running Bird abided with his sweetheart and his friends until evening. White Flower had at first pleaded to go with him, but he said it was impossible. He had planned to take her, but the loss of the horses had changed all that. The trip would be too hard for her, and, besides, he could not spare the time to proceed as slowly as he must if she were with him on foot. He must hasten to join Black Moon, or he would miss all the glory of the fighting. The white soldiers had already passed on. Perhaps even now, he had tarried too long. At the mention of Black Moon and the fighting, the Indian Girl's face lightened wonderfully, and she bade him go at once. Not for all the world would she have hindered him then. Her savage little heart was still singing its pæans of joy over the return of her lover to his faith and his people.

"We will take good care of her, Running Bird," promised Hugh, holding the Indian's hand a long time before he let him go; "and when this useless and cruel war is over, you will come for her and I will marry you. We shall all be very happy then."

Running Bird glanced swiftly at his sweetheart. What would she say to a Christian ceremony?

"Yes, I will come for her," he said, before she had

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

time to speak ; “ and then we shall say good-bye, and our white friends will see us no more.”

“ Only I, Running Bird,” said Hugh, with his serene smile. “ It is not so easy for brothers to say that word. You mean *we* shall say good-bye to our white friends, and it may be that we shall see them no more. For whither thou goest —” he paused, still smiling, for he knew that Running Bird understood.

In the quiet of early evening, the Indian slipped away and was soon lost to sight in the fast gathering gloom. A little later, Locke, from now on captain of the crew, placed the members of his company as he would have them — the two girls in the stern from whence they could easily slip to the bottom when they became sleepy, or if menace from the shore demanded a safer position ; Hugh Hunt in the bow on the lookout for danger ahead ; himself at the oars. The Missionary could be trusted to see but not to give the quick turn that would save collision with a partly submerged tree trunk, or to keep the boat’s nose uncompromisingly straight with the current to prevent her from capsizing when unexpectedly running into a stretch of rapids. Neither of these crises could be safely met and overcome without experience.

The girls, after the first fear of the dark and rushing river had somewhat passed away, slept. Thus, during the day, they were able to maintain the lookout for Indians while the men took their rest. They had plenty of provisions, provided they were not unduly delayed before reaching the first military post, where they hoped

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

to replenish their stock. The weather was perfect, still and fair for the most part. Strangely enough, there were no alarms. Sometimes during the day, while they lounged away the time in the shade of the trees, they saw smoke rising in the distance which White Flower said came from signal fires; but they met no one, saw no one. The long days and nights drifted dreamily away, and, in the peace of them, and in the great joy of going home, Katharine almost forgot the awful shadow that still lay between her and happiness. It seemed so far away now—the shadow—in the serenity of these fair days when nothing came to disturb the sweetness and peace of her love and Locke's in the wild and rugged and lonely but Summer-kissed country of the Yellowstone. On their part, White Flower and Hugh Hunt dreamed their dreams, too, and perhaps they were just as fair, and the Missionary's fairest of all, though he could not help seeing himself travelling the way to the place of those dreams alone—always alone.

They stopped at all the forts along the river, which tended to lighten materially the hardships of their undertaking. At all of them, the wayfarers received a hearty welcome and were urged to remain until a steamer should be returning; but the length of the stay of the steamers in the upper country was so problematical, and their trip thus far had been attended with so much of good fortune, they could not be persuaded to wait. Primitive though living was at these frontier posts, it seemed almost luxurious to them after their long expe-

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

rience in the open; and, when they finally continued their journey down the river, they always felt much rested and refreshed.

At Fort Abraham Lincoln, they were particularly welcomed and plied with questions by the anxious wives of the officers of the gallant Seventh Cavalry. Though they had been so recently at the front, it was little the guests could tell, except that the very grass seemed to grow Indians. They had not met the troops on the march. All they had seen of the soldiers was the ashes of their camp-fires. The sweet-faced wife of the General who never came back, although sadly disappointed when she learned that the new arrivals had seen nothing of the Seventh Cavalry itself, was very gracious to Katharine Mendenhall and urged her to remain with her and the other wives until some boat went down; but Katharine was adamant in her determination to press on without more delay than was absolutely necessary. When the little party left, all the waiting, newsless, isolated people at the fort trooped down to the river to speed them on their way, all unconscious that even then a steamer was on its sad journey to them, heavy with the tidings it bore, tortured with the suffering of its wounded.

A night's journey out of Fort Lincoln, Hugh Hunt, to his utter dismay, found himself unable to lift his head without a darkness swimming dizzily before his eyes. If he should be the cause of detaining Katharine Mendenhall longer from her parents! He gripped himself hard, rested all day, at night, took his place in the

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

bow of the boat, and quietly toppled down to the bottom. When he opened his dizzy eyes, he was on shore on a bed consisting of everybody's blankets. Locke and Katharine were bending anxiously over him, while White Flower tended a fire, carefully secluded under an overhanging bluff and cleverly barricaded with rocks so that its gleam could not penetrate far. On the fire, some odorous concoction was brewing. So, after all, he was to be the cause of delay!

"Forgive me," he said, gently. "It is nothing. I think, in an hour or two, I shall be able to go on. I did not intend to be so foolish."

"Indeed, we will not go on," said Katharine, warmly. "The motion of the boat would only serve to increase the dizziness. You have a fever. It comes from complete exhaustion, I think. White Flower is making you a tonic out of some herbs she has with her. Then you must sleep."

"But you — it is so terrible for you," he murmured, wearily.

"You must not forget that, but for you, I should not be here at all," she said, gently.

He was no better in the morning. Toward evening, he called Locke to him.

"You must go on to-night with Miss Mendenhall," he said earnestly. "It is not fair to her to keep her here longer. Leave me some rations and blankets and White Flower, and I shall do very well. White Flower will take care of me for Running Bird's sake."

"You might just as well spare yourself breath once

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

and for all," said Locke, with a smile. "We shall never any of us leave you. That question is altogether settled. It is useless to pursue it farther."

"I have not deserved such friendship. I am grateful — but I wish you would take her home," said Hugh, wistfully.

A day or two afterward, in the afternoon, Katharine and White Flower climbed the bluffs to see if there were any signs of Indians. They were little afraid, as they had been absolutely unmolested since leaving the Powder; but ordinary caution demanded that a lookout be maintained during their enforced stay on shore. Locke had fallen asleep by the side of the Missionary. The climb to the summit of the bluffs made them very warm, and, after a careless glance around, Katharine faced upstream to let the breeze fan her flushed countenance. A touch on her arm caused her to wheel quickly. White Flower's eyes were gazing steadily over the prairie, her finger was upon her lips. At first, Katharine saw nothing but sun-seared grass and shining sky. Presently, however, she shrank back in terror. Something appeared above that knoll over yonder, only to disappear as quickly. To Katharine's alarmed imagination, the mysterious object had taken on the likeness of a man's head and shoulders.

"I saw it once before," whispered White Flower.

"We must run and tell the boys," cried Katharine, hurriedly.

"Wait," said White Flower.

A long time, they waited and watched the little knoll

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

that lay, quiet and innocent-looking, under the white glare of the sun; but they saw nothing more, and Katharine's sudden fright fell from her.

"It must have been a wolf," she said, relieved, and, White Flower not dissenting, she accompanied the Indian girl back to camp, firm in the belief that what they had seen was but some wild creature of the prairie.

As they approached the camp, they perceived that the men were still sleeping; and then, suddenly, they halted, riveted to the spot. A moving bush had attracted their attention simultaneously. Soon, from between its leafy branches, a dusky face peered forth, and a pair of dark, gleaming eyes gazed down upon the unconscious slumberers. So well had Katharine schooled herself during her residence in the Dakota camp, that she did not scream but only stared in speechless horror. The bushes swayed more violently than before, and this time, the tall form of an Indian stepped into full view and stood looking down meditatively upon the sleeping men. With a little inarticulate cry, White Flower sprang forward, and Katharine followed in a rush of glad relief. The man was Running Bird.

The confusion attendant upon their greetings soon aroused Locke and the Missionary, and then there were more greetings. The welcome was so hearty and sincere that his pleasure in it showed even through the stolid self-control of his Indian nature; but, even so, Hugh Hunt who, perhaps, loved him best of all, knew that he carried a heavy heart.

"The Slender Ash is sick," said Running Bird, the

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

gloom of his countenance deepening. "All the world is sick, it seems to me."

"No, no, I am nearly well now," Hugh assured him, "thanks to White Flower as well as to these others. Ah, Running Bird, I congratulate you with all my heart on the bride you have won." In his soul, Hugh thanked God that he had not been led into error when once, a long time ago, he had wished that he might conscientiously help Mad Wolf win this girl away from his friend, because she had an Indian heart.

"Was it you, Running Bird?" asked Katharine, curiously.

"Who, me?" grunted Running Bird, in surprise.

"Why, the man we saw, or thought we saw, bob up from behind a knoll away over there on the bluff," explained Katharine.

Running Bird looked at her attentively for a moment, and then at White Flower who confirmed Katharine's words with a nod. Without a word of explanation or of apology, he turned on his heel and was soon observed stealing up the side of the bluff. In a little while, he was lost to view. His return was awaited with breathless interest. When he came back, he said, briefly, that he had found signs of a horse's hoofs on the prairie sod; and, as there was evidence of only the one animal, it was reasonable to suppose that the marks had been left by a lone horse strayed from pasture. Hugh thought he seemed a little perturbed, but the rest of the party were plainly relieved at the matter-of-fact statement, and Locke went gayly about his prep-

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

arations for renewing the journey that night. Hugh had insisted on his fitness for the trip.

"And now tell us about the battle," said Hugh, gravely.

At the words, Locke left off his fitting up of the boat and drew near to listen, realizing for the first time that it was altogether probable that Running Bird had come straight from the field. So peaceful and uneventful had been their progress down the river that it seemed hard to believe there had been stirring action, much bloodshed, the making of much history, and the breaking of many hearts during those few short days.

"It was as I said," began Running Bird, thus importuned. "The Great Father had no conception of our numbers. I obtained a very swift horse from some friends I met, and soon joined my soldier band, who were with Black Moon on the Little Big Horn. Crazy Horse had also just arrived with news of the fighting with Crook on the Rosebud. It was a very great victory for the Oglala chief. In the morning he should have finished. There would have been no man left."

"And why did n't he, Running Bird?" asked Hugh, quietly.

"Crazy Horse withdrew in the night," was the sudden bitter answer. "He was satisfied with his one little victory. He was a fool. All my people are fools," he interpolated, with sombre fierceness. "It is right that the white should have the ascendancy over the red. White soldiers never run away when they have struck one blow; they stay until they have finished their

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

enemy so that he cannot recover and strike back. I told Crazy Horse that was the way, but it was his battle; he had won it, and he slipped away in the night to rejoice over it. Then, while all our seven mighty villages lay waiting, there came a handful of men under the leadership of that war chief who found our gold. I think that the Great Father will never again go to war with the Dakotas without first seeing for himself whether or not the warriors are sleeping in their tipis. Is it that he holds the lives of his soldiers so cheap? They were very brave, but they were swallowed up by our thousands of Dakotas as a pebble thrown from the shore is swallowed up by the river. A rush, a splash, little ripples — no pebble. It all happened in a very few minutes. He was foolish to lead his men into an ambush, but he was very brave. He was the bravest enemy I ever knew. He died fighting to the last," concluded Running Bird, moodily.

"Do you mean to say our troops were whipped?" cried Locke, incredulously.

"I think they must have been," said the Indian, quietly, "for no one came out to boast of victory or to send word to the Great Father how many we really were. It is a pity that he did not know."

"It is a pity he did not know," repeated Hugh, in a low voice, shading his eyes with his hand.

"And not one came back?" whispered Katharine. Dead! All dead, like the ashes of those camp-fires at the mouth of the far-away Powder!

"I — cannot seem to believe it," said Locke, slowly.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"And then what happened?" questioned White Flower, eagerly.

"The earth grew warriors. We swarmed over the whole world. We fought that leader who had taken up his position on the east side of the Little Horn until away in the night, and we fought him again in the morning. Then we had to go away for a little while because we had no more ammunition. It was the greatest victory the Dakotas ever had. It was even greater than Red Cloud's war."

"What are you doing here, Running Bird, if your victory was so great?" asked Hugh, searchingly.

The Indian stood up, drew himself to his full height, and folded his arms in the old haughty way.

"It is no use," he said, his voice full of mournful cadences. It was given him then, as it had once been given to Black Tomahawk and to others, to see the end, and, in giving utterance to the prophecy, his Indian heart was broken. "If Black Moon had not been killed so early, it might have been different. He was a great leader. But it is too late now. My people are all scattered. They are content with the one great blow struck. They follow no one man — each does as he pleases. They like best to break up into small bands. No one sticks to the other. It does not seem Indian nature to stick together to the end. The Dakotas have won so great a victory that they think the Black Hills and the buffalo country are saved to us. If we had stayed together and beaten those other soldiers who are marching there, and still stayed together until

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

the Great Father had sent yet others, and beaten them all, I think he would have given up then as he did for Red Cloud. But we scattered, and now he will not be afraid of little bands. He will never give up. He will be revenged for those men who never came out of the valley. It is right. The white man is a smarter man than the Indian. When I saw my people scattering and contenting themselves with murdering settlers in the Black Hills, thinking in their foolishness that that was all they had to do now, I thought of my little white brother — how it was not his way to kill or to steal or to lie; how much greater and smarter he was than any Indian I ever knew, and how he mourned over the mistakes white people make as well as Dakotas. It seemed to me that the Great Spirit meant that I should listen to him because his way was the right way. I have listened in the past to the Great Father and his counsellors. They murdered my father and stole my land and my gold, and laughed at their sacred pledges. I have listened to Black Moon, Gall, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and all the great leaders of my people. They scattered and are wantonly putting to death defenceless men, women, and children. Then I thought of the Slender Ash. All that he ever told me is true. He is the wisest of all, and the best. Because he is true, I think his Man on the Cross is true. So I washed all the war paint off, sent my young men on toward the Agency, and myself rode fast day and night, for I hoped to overtake the Slender Ash somewhere on the road. I came almost straight across country. But I should have missed him

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

if he had not been sick. I am sorry that he is sick, but I am glad to find him again. I am only a poor Indian and my heart is heavy because of many things — but I think my little white brother will understand. I have come to listen to him always, and to do the best I can.”

And Hugh Hunt thought he had failed when Running Bird went to war! Both of his hands were before his eyes now, for they were full of tears. Katharine, too, was weeping softly in sympathy. No one noticed White Flower — no one, at least, except Running Bird. All the joy had gone from her expressive face. It looked dull and old. She slipped away by herself presently and her lover made no effort to follow her. He knew that she wanted to fight it out alone. When she came back, she would probably revile him for cowardice, ridicule him for soft-heartedness, scorn him as a man, and — leave him. That was one of the things which made his heart so heavy. But a gleam came into his eyes — he should not let his little White Flower go easily.

Meanwhile, he was helping Locke to load up, while Katharine and the Missionary laughingly gave orders. It was getting dusk. A red afterglow shone on the river. Suddenly, the evening quiet was broken by a woman's piercing scream. It came from the bluff. Locke and Running Bird seized their rifles and ran forward, but the Indian soon out-distanced the white man. He scaled the bluff with the liveness and swiftness of a wild cat. Arrived at its summit, he was just in time

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

to see White Flower struggling frantically in the arms of two dismounted Indians before they flung her across the saddle in front of a third mounted savage, and then sprang to their own ponies. Their companion scampered away over the prairie. Before they had time to mount, Running Bird's rifle rang out, and a dusky, half-naked form writhed on the grassy hill-top. That gave the first one his chance, and, leaping on his horse, he was off like the wind just as Locke came up and joined Running Bird in his chase after the fleeing redskins. Both men were firing incessantly as they ran. The Indian in the rear returned the fire but the one in advance—he who carried White Flower—urged his horse the faster and never once looked back, trusting to his lieutenants to cover his retreat.

"Don't shoot at him!" cried Running Bird. "We might hurt her! I will see to him later—if we can only get this fellow before he is out of range!"

Even as he spoke, the Indian reeled in his saddle and fell to the ground.

"I must get my horse now," said Running Bird, throwing down his rifle and making for a gulch a short distance away where he had tied his horse.

"Running Bird!" cried Locke, sharply. "You will lose your man if you are n't careful, and for God's sake take your gun! What do you mean by throwing it away?" He was trying to keep up with the nimble Indian as he cried his disapproval of Running Bird's methods.

"He dropped his," said Running Bird, springing

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

lightly into his saddle. "He is trusting altogether in flight. Very well, let him. I will have no gun. I might hurt her. I think I know him," he continued, grimly. "I should like to meet him face to face."

Emitting a shrill, Indian cry, he bent his head and was off over the prairie in wild pursuit. The runaway had the advantage of the lead; but his horse was carrying double, and Locke considered the chances about even. He was hastening back to reassure Katharine and the Missionary, who would probably think that the whole camp was to be attacked, when he met them just emerging from behind the brow of the bluff. They understood the situation at a glance.

"Can it be High Dog?" questioned Katharine, excitedly. "Oh, poor White Flower!"

Hugh Hunt was breathing heavily.

"You should not have come," rebuked Locke, gravely. "You were not strong enough."

"I tried to keep him," explained Katharine, "but he would not listen to me."

"I was afraid for Running Bird," apologized Hugh, simply.

The country was level for a long distance, and the riders could be plainly seen as they continued their mad dash over the prairie. It was lighter up here on the plateau than it was in the valley. Running Bird was steadily gaining on his enemy. He had the better horse, and it was not doubly burdened. The anxious spectators saw him soon overtake White Flower's abductor. Both Indians dismounted, and White Flower



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Running Bird was gaining steadily on his enemy

THE NEW
AMERICAN

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

ran to one side. The men clinched and swayed. At last, both fell to the ground and neither one got up. White Flower ran to the place where the wrestlers had fallen, and knelt down. The rest of the party, who, all during the encounter, had been pressing forward, now quickened their pace.

"They are both dead, I think," said Hugh, in a low, strange voice.

White Flower looked up as they approached. She was trying to stanch the blood which was flowing profusely from Running Bird's shoulder. Hugh knelt down at once to help her, ripping his shirt from his own body for a bandage. The other Indian lay crumpled up in death.

"He taunted him," said White Flower, whisperingly, her voice thrilling with triumph. "Mad Wolf taunted him and said he had killed Black Bull — Black Bull who did not start back to Big Bend with the rest of Running Bird's band because he had word of Mad Wolf's presence in Yellow Owl's war party. When he had killed the grandson of White Shield, he followed Running Bird because he knew that would lead him to White Flower. He said he had taken her from under Running Bird's very nose — and he boasted that he would keep her. He cried out in a loud voice that as he had killed Black Bull, he would kill all his enemies, and he grabbed his knife and plunged it into Running Bird's shoulder. He meant it for the heart, but Running Bird was too quick for him. He swung aside, drew his own knife and drove it into Mad Wolf's heart.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Mad Wolf called him a coward, but he will not call him that again. Running Bird is no coward, if he does listen to the woman's talk of the white man," she ended, looking defiantly at the Missionary.

It was a bad cut; but exhaustion as much as the effect of the wound had kept Running Bird from getting up. Mad Wolf, too, had a splendid physique, and the strain of the fight had been severe before ever the knives were drawn. When the wound was finally bound up as well as it could be under the circumstances, and Running Bird had somewhat recovered from his exhaustion, he was assisted to his horse, and Hugh mounted behind to support him in the saddle, while White Flower held him from the side, and Katharine led the still panting pony. Locke lingered to throw the quiet, unresisting body of the once wild Brule over the back of the masterless horse, and to bring it back to be buried by the side of its two companions on the hill-top.

It was a strange procession. Night had fallen at last, but in Summer, on cloudless nights, it is never altogether dark on those hill-tops.

"I thought it was High Dog," said Katharine, softly. "What a mint of lovers you have, White Flower."

"Where were they, White Flower?" asked Hugh.

"They slipped from behind a clump of plum bushes," said White Flower. "I knew Mad Wolf right away. It was probably he whom we saw behind the knoll. So I screamed."

"Why?"

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

"Because I knew he wanted me and would carry me off," said White Flower, composedly.

"But you thought I was a coward," said Running Bird, in Dakota, leaning heavily against the Missionary. "Why did you scream? Did n't you want to go with him? Mad Wolf was no coward."

"When I saw him, I knew that I could not bear to go away from you," whispered White Flower, also in Dakota, lifting her luminous eyes to his in the darkness. "And when you killed him, I knew you were no coward. You are very weak," she said, as they helped him from the horse at the camp. "Once the wind blew a White Flower out of your reach when you thought you had it. But now it sways the other way—and you will not have to move—for—"

"My little White Flower," he murmured, brokenly, as she crept into his arms.

They laid him upon Hugh's bed in the boat, and, while White Flower watched over him, the three white people once more climbed the bluff to perform the melancholy duty of returning the bodies of the three Indians to the dust from which they came.

"He hated much, and he sinned much," said Hugh, as he gently placed a stone at the head of the shallow grave, "but he has paid the earthly price for his hating and his sinning. We, through whose mistakes he fell, have still the price to pay. I pray God," he continued reverently, "that our eyes may be opened to our errors before we cause many more to stumble as this poor fellow did."

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Katharine brought a stone, too, and laid it sadly there. She had before, with a sweet, womanly thought, thrown into the open grave some green branches from the plum trees that fringed the top of the bluff. As they turned to leave to its solitude the quiet, lonely spot, they thought of the many things that had conspired to make Mad Wolf what he was. They thought especially of the whiskey certain lawless people had sold to him to make him mad, and of the gold certain others would take from him which had rendered him desperate; so that they were very sad at heart when they silently seated themselves in the boat, having abandoned the Indian ponies, to drift once more down the dark river.

They left Running Bird at the next fort, where he could get much-needed medical assistance from the army surgeon there. White Flower stayed with him. Just before the boat continued its journey, the surgeon, Katharine Mendenhall, and Locke Raynor Crawford gathered in the sick room to witness the Christian ceremony which united Running Bird and White Flower as man and wife. The words of the service were read solemnly but with a deep happiness by Hugh Hunt, a Missionary of the White Robe.

When all had left the room but Hugh and White Flower, "I kill no more," Running Bird whispered, from his comfortable bed, strange yet to the Indian but accepted without a murmur because of the new life he was to lead. "But I had to kill Mad Wolf, did n't I, little brother?"

INTO HIS OWN AT LAST

"Yes," said Hugh Hunt, sadly, "you had to kill Mad Wolf."

"I have lost everything else. I could not lose White Flower, too."

"Everything, Running Bird?" cried Hugh, his face lighting up with a wonderful radiance. "Rather have you gained everything! The Man on the Cross who never fights back is more than all these — more than gold or lands or nations — more than pride or greed or falsehood — more than covetousness, double-dealing, or broken pledges — more than wars or triumphs or the scalps of our enemies — more than white or red or black — more than all — better than all — greater than all. Ah, my brother, my brother, when you have gained Him, you have come into your own at last!"

CHAPTER XXV

"I THINK — I CAN NEVER GO HOME AGAIN"

THE prosecuting attorney was making his closing argument. Although Barton and Sampson, attorneys for the defendant, had put their whole souls into this second fight, the testimony did not differ materially from that produced at the first trial. Locke's friends were at heart discouraged, but they continued to present a brave front to the world. The Government had refrained from making use of the prisoner's having broken jail, for fear of the sympathy which might be gained for him when the defence retaliated by explaining the real motive which actuated him, coupled with the fact of his having given himself up after his object had been accomplished.

Katharine Mendenhall had been present at every session of the court until now. For the first time since the beginning, her place down in front, close to the wall, was vacant. So many knew her pathetic story and her interest in the prisoner at the bar, that this chair was always left for her. It was empty now, though the court room was crowded, as it had been from the first day. Many missed the sweet, pale, absorbed face, with its crown of shining hair, and the

“I CAN NEVER GO HOME”

dark blue eyes where dwelt a knowledge of the deeps of life which would make her a gentler woman as long as she lived. She always wore a plain little dress of some dark material, which served only to enhance the pale, grave beauty of her face, and the gold of her thick coils of braided hair. Simply as she dressed, she looked queenly to those who had so long seen her only in her short, fringed suit of antelope skin; and even strangers remarked upon the evident refinement and unquestionable loveliness of the woman whom the prisoner so loved. Many watched for her return, but the long, impassioned, closing demand for the guilty man's life to be forfeited to the Government was almost ended, and she did not come. The prisoner had ceased glancing restlessly down at the empty chair since Sampson had whispered to him Katharine's message. The opening argument, in which that so able man had summed up the evidence in such a forcible and convincing manner as to cause any disinterested person to believe that Locke must be guilty, had been too much for her already overstrained nerves. She sent word that she could not bear to hear the lawyer again but that she would be there when the verdict was returned.

“I hope you are proud of that girl,” said Sampson, briefly, when he had delivered the message.

Locke did not answer but his eyes kindled and his face flushed.

“When her father was recalled to Big Bend,” continued Sampson, “he did everything in his power to force that girl to go with him. But do you think she'd

T H E S P I R I T T R A I L

do it? She never even answered him—in so many words. She just smiled and —stayed. What do you suppose the Agent's business was, anyway. It must have been important or he'd never have left her again. They tell me he has n't let her out of his sight since you took her home from the Indians until now. Well, I congratulate you with all my heart upon having her."

The prosecuting attorney was just rounding off his peroration with an earnest admonition to the jury to do their duty and to see to it that the perpetrator of such a foul deed go not unpunished, when the Marshal came into the room. He stepped softly forward and whispered something to the speaker, the lawyer bending his head to listen attentively.

"Your Honor," he said then, "I have just learned of something that might have an important bearing upon this case. I should like to be excused for a few minutes."

"You are excused," said the Court. "Be back, however, as soon as you can, as I want to submit the case to the jury before supper."

In about twenty minutes, the prosecuting attorney returned.

"Your Honor," he said, "Peter Dorsey, our principal witness, has been shot in a gambling den and is dying. He has made a statement to me which leads me to believe that the defendant is not guilty, and I do not wish to prosecute the case any farther. I will prepare a statement and an order dismissing the case."

The jury was discharged, the defendant released from

‘‘I CAN NEVER GO HOME’’

custody, and a recess taken, all so quickly and unexpectedly, that Locke was almost dazed with the suddenness of it all. People crowded around him, congratulating him, asking him questions. Mr. Sampson was shaking hands so vigorously that he forgot he was monopolizing until forcibly reminded of the fact by others pushing up. Many had involuntarily liked the handsome, clever, clear-eyed, athletic, mysterious prisoner, despite the terrible charge against him. These now openly rejoiced; and many, whose interest in the case had been intensified by the presence of the tall, slender, black-robed, care-worn young woman from the upper country, glanced thoughtfully at her still empty chair and wished that she were there to witness her lover's complete vindication, as she had been there to hear all the bad which had been said about him and all the lies which he had been told. And Locke? So insistent was his longing to fly to Katharine and tell her, that he was on the point of roughly forcing his way through the crowd of jostling, excited people, when the door was thrown violently open, and a man rushed up the aisle, out of breath, and made straight for the quondam prisoner. People stared in wonder at this new promise of some extraordinary development in this most unusual case. The newcomer was an important looking personage with iron gray hair, smooth face, expressive eyes under heavy brows, and clothes of unmistakable Eastern cut. He grasped Locke's hand, and, while Locke returned the greeting cordially, his face was a study in astonishment not unmingled with chagrin.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

"Explain yourself, young man," cried the stranger, at once. "Murder? That was the deuce and all, was n't it? I just heard, as a rattle trap of an omnibus jolted me out at the door, that you had been released. High time, too! Why, in the name of reason, did n't you let a fellow know you were in trouble?"

"I'm awfully glad to see you, uncle," said Locke, with a smile in which relief and affection were curiously blended with a hint of dismay. "But how did you get here — and why did you come — and how did you hear about this infernal business anyway — and — how is dad? Implacable as ever?"

The two men were walking slowly down the aisle as they talked. At the foot of the outer steps, the United States Marshal was standing. He held out his hand and Locke took it silently.

"It was that cursed pink bank-note, Mr. Crawford," he said. "Up to that, I would have taken my oath on your innocence."

That was his only apology.

"I think you were prejudiced against Special Inspector Warlick," said Locke, laughingly. "If he had been for me, you would have been 'forninst.' Is it not so? Let me present my uncle, the Secretary of the Interior."

"Your family tree is prolific in the growth of names," said the Marshal, after he had shaken hands with the cabinet member. "You'll have to enlighten me, Mr. Crawford. I thought you said that your mother's maiden name was Raynor?"

“I CAN NEVER GO HOME”

“And so it was. My mother was my uncle’s half-sister.”

“Well, well,” said the Marshal, shaking his head in frank surprise. “Who would have thought it? And I thought I had you on that name proposition for sure.”

On the way to the hotel, the Secretary explained to his nephew how it was that the news of the trial and Locke’s connection with it had come to his notice.

“I have been having some correspondence with Inspector Warlick in regard to Indian affairs at Big Bend,” he said, “and once I had occasion to write directly to Major Mendenhall. In his reply, explaining some things, he happened to mention the Inspector’s antipathy to an issue clerk who had been giving excellent service at Big Bend, until arrested, tried, and convicted of murder in the first degree. He said the young man had gone by the name of Locke Raynor, but that he gave his name at the first trial as Locke Raynor Crawford. Think of it, boy, you — Isabel’s child — convicted of murder in the first degree! This Agent went on to explain that it was greatly through the influence of Special Inspector Warlick that you were arrested in the first place. He was talking about you, else I should have thought he was trying to prejudice me against the Inspector, who, I understand, is about to prefer some sort of charges against the Agent. It seems they are in a devil of a mess up there. I think I’ll just run up and straighten things out myself as long as I’m here anyway. As soon as I read the letter,

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

I took the next train, and here I am. Where have you been all this time, boy, and what have you been doing? Why did you leave home, and how did you manage to get yourself into this sort of a scrape anyway?"

They had arrived at the entrance to the hotel by this time, the same hotel where Locke and Brian Levering had sat together one Summer evening, and here Locke halted.

"If you will excuse me, uncle," he said, quietly, "I will meet you here in an hour. I must go now. Miss Mendenhall does not know of my release. She has been very anxious. I will explain everything when I get back."

"Great Scott, Locke, I hope you have n't gone and tangled yourself up with any of these husky frontier girls! Your father and I have other plans for you. I ran up to New York to see him a short time before I received that dynamite of a letter. He's a broken man, Locke. He needs you, and the business needs you. Sometimes he is afraid you haven't made good; for you promised that you would come back in a year, having proved some things which you undertook to prove, and it is over two years, you know; and sometimes he thinks you are dead. Young men oftentimes do not realize just how much they mean to their fathers. He has not been the same since you left. I dared not tell him about this complication. He is not very well these days. You must forget all about that misunderstanding, Locke. I thought myself, at one time, that you were going to the devil head first. I was afraid

“I CAN NEVER GO HOME”

you were the proverbial rich man's son. Your father's heart was just about broken when you came home from your German University and your travels, with a list of extravagances which so incensed him that he quarrelled with you very bitterly. Remember, he had been planning a long time on having you in the business. It's my private opinion that, unless you go back, the Crawford Wholesale House will either go out of business altogether or pass into other hands. As I said before, your father is not the same. He does n't seem to care any more. Of course, you know better than I do whether or not you can handle the management. I have n't heard the particulars of these two years yet. But, candidly, I think you have made good. There is a look about your eyes that I like. More of that later. Now about this girl —”

“Uncle, please excuse me. I am in — somewhat of a hurry.”

“Well,” said the Secretary, bluntly, “more of her later, too. If she is a girl you can't take home, why, that ends it, I suppose. I hoped you were free. I wish you would be sensible for once and marry some good, steady girl in your own station. It would help you to settle down.”

“I think,” said Locke, very gravely, “that you need not be afraid. I think the experiences of these two years have settled me firmly — so firmly that I sometimes think there is little spring left in me. I do not need a wife for that purpose — or care for one. If Miss Mendenhall will go East with me, I shall be very

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

glad indeed to go home to my father. If she prefers to remain in the West, in the West we shall live and die. Not my will, nor yours, nor my father's, where our home shall be, but my wife's. Good-bye for a little while." He turned abruptly and walked rapidly down the street.

The Secretary looked after him a moment, a smiling tenderness in his eyes, before the mask of the world and the multitudinous cares of a cabinet officer settled again over his face.

"Just like Isabel," he thought. "Off like a pot leg because I wounded his feelings about that wretched girl. She was the most loyal woman I ever knew, and — her boy is like her. Confound it all, I hope, for all our sakes, that she is a girl he can take back to New York and Washington. But I am afraid. According to Inspector Warlick, this Agent is a bombastic, dishonest, grasping, bluffing sort of a fellow. It would be dreadful if his daughter should prove to be a feminine replica — an ignorant, flaunting, prairie — I was going to say weed, but maybe I'd better say *flower* and postpone judgment until after I have seen her."

Katharine had gone to the home of some friends when her father had been unexpectedly and urgently summoned to Big Bend. They were an elderly couple and were not attending the trial at all. Her mother was not in the city. She had not yet recovered her strength lost by the shock of her daughter's mysterious disappearance.

"She's in the parlor, waiting to hear when the jury's

“I CAN NEVER GO HOME”

gone out, poor dear,” whispered the woman of the house, as she opened the door in response to Locke’s quick knock. “She’s just grieving herself to death over the trial that’s going on over to the court house. It’s her lover, you know, that’s on trial for his life. Shall I announce you?”

“No, let me go in alone,” said Locke, in a low voice. “I am a friend. She will be glad to see me.”

He opened the door softly and stepped inside the room. She was sitting by a small table in the middle of the primly arranged “best room.” Her arms were thrown upon the table and her fair head was buried in them. Her whole attitude was one of complete abandonment to despair. On a chair by her side lay her hat and gloves. She was plainly awaiting the summons to the court room. Seeing her thus brought a lump to Locke’s own throat, though his step, as he crossed the space between them, was light with the sheer joy of the disclosure which was his to make to her. He laid his hand very gently on the coils of her braided hair. She looked up quickly, careless of her tear-streaked face and swollen eyes. She thought the time had come. When she saw who it was that had touched her, she still did not realize the significance of his presence. The wild thought flashed through her mind that he had come himself to tell her that it was the end. How, she did not question. She rose quietly, her face like death, and slipped her arms around his neck.

“They cannot have you,” she whispered, in a strange voice. “I will keep them away.”

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

“Katharine — darling — sweetheart!” he cried, holding her close, alarmed at the strangeness of her manner. “I am not a prisoner any more. I am free! I have come to tell you. I can go where I like — do what I like. Peter Dorsey was fatally shot in a gambling den to-day, and he sent for the prosecuting attorney. He made a statement to the lawyer which caused the Government to refuse to carry the prosecution any farther. I do not know just what my plain-word friend, Peter, said; but he must have made it very plain that I was not guilty, for I am free. Oh, my darling, my darling!” he cried, passionately. “Free! I am free to marry you!”

She was still weeping softly, her face pressed close against his breast; but they were happy tears, oh, very happy tears indeed, and, when at last she lifted her face, her eyes were like stars. He promptly kissed them, and the tremulous lips as well.

“Will you marry me to-day?” he asked, a gleam coming into his eyes.

She shook her head, smilingly.

“Why not?”

“My father and mother have suffered much through me. I am all they have. I must be married at home. Besides, it cannot be until poor daddy is out of trouble.”

Her face had sobered.

“What about him, sweetheart? What is his trouble? I wondered why he left.”

“He knew trouble was brewing for him. That is why he went home. The United States Marshal told me

‘‘I CAN NEVER GO HOME’’

to-day that he has a warrant for my father's arrest. Mr. Warlick swore it out, accusing him of issuing false vouchers, or something like that. Locke, that man has meant mischief for you and for my father from the first day he landed in the Indian country. I do not know why, but he has. I don't know what to do about my father. The Marshal said he'd have to arrest him as soon as he could get to Big Bend."

"I should n't worry very much about it, dear girl," said Locke, decidedly. "We'll get even with those shining boots yet. My uncle is here. By the way, Katharine, my uncle is the Secretary of the Interior, but please don't jump on him on account of the egregious blunders which were made in regard to those Agency Indians who could not get back. He's really an awfully fine chap in most respects. You know he was n't on the ground and did n't understand. I am apologizing for him because you are such a confirmed little Indian since you were adopted into Black Tomahawk's family, that I am afraid your judgments might be so far-reaching as to include the nephew as well as the uncle. You won't hold it against me, will you, my girl?" he coaxed, his lips brushing her hair.

"I don't know," she said, with an attempt at severity. "If you will sit down and behave yourself, we'll see about it. No, over there! This chair is mine. Now, no — stay right where you are — we were speaking about Mr. Warlick."

"Yes," said Locke, a sternness creeping into his voice. "I shall ask just one favor of the Secretary

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

of the Interior. I shall take advantage of my kinship to the man in power but for this one thing. I shall ask for the immediate discharge of Special Inspector Warlick."

"Where is your uncle now? I always knew you had friends at court, Locke, only you were too proud to call upon them."

"He is at the hotel, waiting to be summoned to meet the woman his scapegrace nephew is going to marry as soon as ever we can get to Big Bend. He says — my father wants me to go home, Katharine. Would you like to go East again?"

"Anywhere, Locke," she said, simply. "I will go wherever you want to go," and the man, remembering how she had said once that she would be lost with him somewhere on the Great Sioux Reservation, bowed his head for a moment, honoring her and loving her.

Presently Hugh Hunt came. The two men clasped hands silently.

"I thought I should find you here," said Hugh, at last. "I could not come before. I went to see Peter Dorsey before he died. I have just come from there. No, he did not send for me. I just went. He confessed to the murder of Brian Levering. He said robbery was his original motive, but, when he found his old enemy at the road-house, the passion for revenge took precedence of everything else and he determined to throw the weight of circumstantial evidence around you, Locke, so as to insure your conviction for the crime of which he himself was guilty. He went back to the

“I CAN NEVER GO HOME”

Crossing after you had gone, and bought poor old Bob's extraordinary forgetfulness. I think fear, however, even more than cupidity, influenced the man's memory. Peter did not die altogether at peace with the world. I am afraid that he hated you as much as ever, Locke; but, as he said, 'When one comes to die, what's the use?' I met the Marshal on the way here. He gave me a message for Miss Mendenhall. A steamer leaves in an hour or two for the up-river. It will very likely be the last one to climb the river this Fall. He thought you might like to take it."

"Indeed, and I do," cried Katharine. "How I thank you, Mr. Hunt! Are you never weary of doing things for other people? You are going home, too, are you not?"

"Yes, I must be there to present Running Bird and White Flower to the White Robe next week for Confirmation."

"White Flower, too?" cried Katharine, in happy surprise.

"White Flower, too," said Hugh, quietly.

"And of course I am going," said Locke, "though I little thought it a while ago. I must call on my lawyers first; then, I will get my uncle and come for you, Katharine."

When the Secretary met Katharine Mendenhall, his face, being well-trained in the world's conventions, expressed only pleasure — nothing whatever of surprise.

"Thank you for loving Locke," he said, simply. He knew now why Locke had not been afraid.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

Before going on board, he sent for Special Inspector Warlick. After the interview, that gentleman took the next train for the East. Thus was Locke's one request granted. The persecution to which his nephew had been subjected at the hands of the officious Inspector served to prepossess the Secretary in Major Mendenhall's favor. Before declaring the interview at an end, he told Mr. Warlick that he would himself look over the evidence, and, if there was cause for prosecution, he would see that it was attended to; if not, the matter would, of course, be dropped.

"Privately," he said to Locke, "I am of your opinion that Mr. Warlick was over-zealous and wanted to earn his salary by getting somebody discharged. His antagonism to you was probably due to his fear of your interfering with his plans to make a reputation for himself by running to earth scandals in the Indian Service. You very likely impressed him as being an unusually intelligent sort of a fellow, and he was afraid you'd cheat him out of some of the honors of the *dé-nouement*. There is enough dishonesty and graft in the Indian Service, Heaven knows, but sometimes the source of it is not rightly located. I will investigate this Agent business thoroughly, and I hope, for your sake, that the charges against him will be found to be altogether without foundation."

So it proved. It was shown beyond the shadow of a doubt that there had been no misappropriation of funds on the part of the Agent, no hush money received, no falsifying of accounts. Neither he nor the post-trader

‘‘I CAN NEVER GO HOME’’

was found to be in fault for the clever trickery at certain cattle-receiving times. Men lower down were proved to be responsible for it — hired herders who coveted flocks of their own, and, whenever occasion presented, manipulated certain transactions so as to enrich themselves at the expense of the Government. When the Agent's absolute integrity had been established beyond question, the Secretary slipped back to Washington.

A few weeks later, a little group of friends stood together in the crude waiting-room of the station at Yankton. It was November and the chill of coming Winter was in the air, though the sun was shining brightly over the sombre tones of the foliage-stripped landscape. Only a few people were standing around to watch the train slip away to that East which was coming to seem farther and farther away as the pioneers found their interests ever more and more taking root in the West country. Especially on days like this did the East seem very far away, when the projecting shadow of Winter in the dreamy air brought visions of snow-drifts, ice-bound rivers, and cutting winds to hedge one in. To many, even yet, that unmistakable tang which departing Autumn leaves behind brought dreams of distant homes, and tears of lonesomeness and longing.

Major and Mrs. Mendenhall had said good-bye at the landing at Big Bend to the beautiful and radiant bride of but a few hours, before Mr. and Mrs. Locke Raynor Crawford, Mr. and Mrs. John Running Bird — John since baptism — and Hugh Hunt had trooped

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

merrily up the gang-plank of the last steamer to brave the perils of becoming ice-locked in the upper country, and which was now hastening down to its Winter dock. It would be very lonely at the Agency now, but — “Oh, my dear, my dear,” sobbed the little worn-faced lady with eyes of tear-dimmed, faded blue, as she watched the boat turn the bend and disappear — “not like the loneliness of those dreadful months when we did not know whether she was living or — dead. I thank God that she is going home at last. She is too fair for the frontier!”

“Too fair for the frontier!” That was what Hugh Hunt’s friends thought about him. “He is too fair and fine for the frontier,” they said. They had grown weary with its vain repetition during the last few weeks. Hugh’s only answer had been a smile. But they renewed it this day, when the harsh bell of the engine, clanging out the news of the train’s having glided up to the platform, brought it home to them poignantly that the time of parting had come.

“So many need ministering to there,” said Katharine, earnestly. “Just because they have money and culture, family and position, must that shut them out from the great good of friendship with a man like you? You will be appreciated there. Here — the Reservation is so wide — after all, one man can do so little. It all seems so hopeless. You will only wear yourself out. You will die, and the world, the real world, will be none the wiser. You are needed in the world, Mr. Hunt!”

“And, you know, there are few Running Birds and

“I CAN NEVER GO HOME”

White Flowers among the Indians,” said Locke, his racial prejudice strong in the hour of his glad return to the life of his world — the life of the cities, where big, worldly things are done and talked about. In after years, he thought tenderly and talked kindly of those dusky and faithful friends with whom he had lived one long, stormy Winter, safely lost on the Great Reservation; but now he was going home — with Katharine; the East called him strongly, and he had little thought for them except the selfish one that they were losing him the companionship of one of the finest men he knew. “If you succeed in reclaiming others, what have you? Are there any more worth saving? Black Tomahawk is dead. Poor old chap — he held to his boast that he would never come back, did n’t he? What a haunted place the valley of the Little Big Horn will always be! Smoke Woman, you have already won, I daresay, as she is now an inmate of Running Bird’s lodge; but I warrant you that fierce old grandmother will die in the faith of her fathers. Yellow Owl is hopeless. I don’t know what you’d want with him anyway — unless it would be to shoot him — but you will never get the Dakota doctor. Besides, he has fled to Canada. There are not many brains left. Give it up, Hugh! Come with us! There will never be another war. They’re tamed. Any one can teach them the A B C of the Bible. What holds you, man? They are only children. We will send kindergarten teachers out to them. It is criminal for you to waste your talents out here. It’s like burying them in the ground.

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

That's not sacrilegious, Hugh, it's the honest truth. Come with us! What keeps you?"

Hugh Hunt stood at the window, his eyes fixed upon the brown hills rising to meet the dreaming November sky.

"There is something," he said, slowly. "It will be very hard — I may not be able to make them see. I had hoped that our blundering would cease after — the Great Tragedy. It would bring the destined end so much nearer — make the way of it so much easier — save so much of doubt and heartache and bloodshed. You know that Running Bird was not asked to sign the new Treaty for the relinquishment of the Black Hills and the buffalo country. They were afraid to ask him. Only a handful signed it, and yet the Laramie Treaty plainly stipulates that no part of the Indian lands can be relinquished without the signatures of three-fourths of the adult males. Perhaps it is best for the white people to have all the wealth of the world. They know how to use it to better advantage — but I think the Dakotas could be easily taught. I think we might very well conserve their wealth for them until they do know how to use it. I think nothing can prosper permanently which is gained by misrepresentation, double-dealing, broken pledges. I should like to go East. It is a sweet and happy land. I was born there. It is home. But I cannot go yet. I must stay to keep telling Running Bird and all those others that, even though they did not sign the new Treaty, the land is theirs no longer. They cannot understand why it is not.

“I CAN NEVER GO HOME”

It will take a long time for some of those proud men who were not asked to sign to be convinced. Many more than the one-fourth of all were not asked to sign. We were afraid to ask them. I have to say we, because I am a white man. Many will not give up without more bloodshed in the time to come — nothing can make them except a finer Christianity than we have ourselves shown, a truer conception of the Man Who does not fight back. I think — I can never go home again.”

He turned when he had said that and smiled, a patient, wistful smile that brought the tears to Katharine's eyes.

“All aboard!” cried the conductor, pushing open the door.

Locke and Katharine shook hands cordially with their Indian friends — Katharine kissing her adopted sister as naturally as if they were of one color — and stepped out on the platform. Hugh Hunt followed them. When the young husband and wife had climbed to the rear platform of the last car, the three stood for a moment silent, with clasped hands. The train began to move — their hands were strained apart by its gathering speed.

Looking back, Locke and Katharine watched the little station sink into the distance. The platform was deserted now save for the presence of one man who stood motionless, his eyes upon the rapidly receding train. The sunlight of the late November afternoon seemed to accentuate the loneliness of the still figure.

“He — he — looks so lonely,” whispered Katharine,

THE SPIRIT TRAIL

the tears springing to her eyes again. "We seem to be deserting him. It does n't seem right some way."

"It does make a fellow feel like a deserter," said Locke, swallowing hard, "but he's such a visionary. No one could do much for him, I fancy; few of us are good enough to live like him, and we could never keep up."

Just then, two figures came from the door of the waiting-room, a man and a woman, and one stood on his right side and one on his left. They were Running Bird and White Flower. As the train slipped around the bend, Hugh Hunt stood erect and lifted his hat high in the air, while the Indians waved their hands.

"I was wrong when I said he was alone," said Katharine, with a little sob, as she and Locke stepped back into the car.

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